SCC
#1,503

A

TREATISE

AGAINST

Detraction,

IN

Ten Sections.

By the Reverend

Mr. *Andrew Le Mercier*,

Paſtor of the French Church at *Boſton* in *New-England.*

Printed at *BOSTON* in *New-England*,
and Sold by *Daniel Henchman.*

1733.

100 800

To the Elders, Deacons and all the Heads of Families of the French Church of Boston in New-England:

Gentlemen, and most honoured & dear Brethren

WE read in the Third Chapter of the Book of *Ezra*, that the *Jews* that returned from the *Babylonian* Captivity "shouted with a great shout, when they praised the Lord, because the Foundation of the House of the Lord was laid. But many of the Priests and Levites and chief of the Fathers who were ancient Men, that had seen the first House, when the Foundation of this House was laid before their Eyes, wept with a loud Voice, and many shouted aloud for Joy; so that the People could not discern the noise of the shout of Joy, from the noise of the weeping of the People: For the People shouted with a loud shout, & the noise was heard afar off". One observes two very strong and contrary Passions in these Words, a bitter Sorrow, and a very great Joy. Indeed the building of the Temple of GOD, afforded just and equal Reasons for both.

This second House wanted the largeness, the Ornaments and several other Advantages that were seen in the former built by *Solomon*; so that there was occasion for mourning: But on the other hand, as by the Mercies and Blessings of GOD and the Protection of their Conquerors, whose Heart GOD had wonderfully turned and melted, they were restored to all their religious Liberties, as Prophets were sent to them to encourage them in their Work, by telling them that the Glory of this second House, was to exceed that of the former, by the coming of the *Messiah* into this his Temple, as the pure Service of GOD was set up again according to the divine Platform of the Law, they had just and great Reasons to praise the Lord with a loud, joyful and thankful Voice.

This is our very Case, *most dear Brethren*, when we consider the fiery Persecution of the Churches of GOD in our native Country, the destruction of his Sanctuarys, his Rod, resting so heavily and so long upon us, we cannot but be affected as *Jeremiah* the Prophet, when he foresaw and foretold the Ruin of *Jerusalem* and the Temple, *Chap* 9. Our Eyes then must need be turned into Rivers of Waters to weep Night and Day the Desolation of the Daughter of our People; but when from that sad Spectacle we cast our Eyes towards the Mercys of GOD, when we consider how graciously he hath been pleased to give us Places of Refuge, and after a Flood of Miseries, preceeded by a Flood of Sins, he hath vouchsafed to afford us in foreign Places, the comfort of serving Him, both according to his Word, and the Dictates of our Consciences,

ſciences, and to ſend us a Branch of Olive by the divine Dove, the *Holy Spirit*, the Comforter; we may, nay, we ſhould praiſe him, bleſs him, and rejoice in him. That made me chuſe for the Text of the firſt Sermon that I preach'd in this Houſe of Prayer of ours, built ſoon after my arrival here, thoſe Words of the ſame *Ezra*, in the 6th Chapter 16th Verſe, *And the Children of Iſrael, the Prieſts and the Levites, and the reſt of the Children of the captivity, kept the Dedication of this Houſe of GOD with joy.*

Let us never forget, I beſeech you in the Name of the Lord, as Ambaſſador of Chriſt, as Meſſenger of Peace and good Tidings, his unſpeakable, undeſerved Favours: How we have happily fled from Perſecution, found acceptance before the People of this Land; how, when we were Strangers, they have taken us in; how ſeveral have contributed towards the building of our Place of Worſhip; how the pious and reverend Miniſters have readily joined with us on our Faſt Days, to implore for and with us, GOD's Forgiveneſs and Peace for the remainders of the faithful in *France*; how the honourable the General Court have cheerfully admitted us into the great and valuable Privileges which they enjoy themſelves as *Engliſhmen*, by their Act of *Naturalization of Proteſtant Foreigners*, and their favourable Anſwer to our Petition; how GOD has not only fed and cloathed you, but even granted to ſome of you conſiderable Eſtates, having after that manner really and literally fulfilled this Promiſe of Chriſt

in the 19th Chapter of *Matthew*; *Every one that hath forſaken Houſes or Brethren, or Siſters, or Father, or Mother, or Wife, or Children, or Lands for my names ſake, ſhall receive an hundred fold, and inherit everlaſting Life.* In order to obtain the ſecond and moſt valuable part of the Promiſe, you are to make a holy uſe of the fulfilment of the firſt, by dedicating your Riches to the Glory of his Name, the relief of the Poor, the ſervice of his Church.

Let us be thankful and ready to do any good Service to thoſe that have ſo kindly entertained us.

Let us take care not to give them any Offence by our bad Conduct and vicious Lives. Let us on the contrary, ſet before them holy Examples, that they may have reaſon not to repent their Kindneſs towards us.

Let us be animated with a holy Zeal for GOD's Honour. It is the misfortune of the *Roman Catholicks* to have a Zeal without Knowlege; it is the Sin of moſt *Proteſtants*, to have Knowlege without Zeal; we ſhall be virtuous and happy if we have both together. Having received ſo much at GOD's Hands, we ſhall be without excuſe if we do not perform our Duties to GOD and to Men, to our Father and Brethren.

For my own part, I ſhall be exceeding glad, if by this little Treatiſe, I can contribute ſomething to the Glory of GOD and to Edification of you, and others of the Engliſh Nation.

I have dedicated it to you, *Gentlemen and most dear Brethren*, as a Token of my Gratitude for the ſeveral Expreſſions of your good Will to me, during all the Time that I have been your Paſtor. You have not deſpiſed my Youth, when I firſt came among you; you have ſince excuſed my Infirmities, and as I did the ſame in reſpect to yours, it has pleaſed our Saviour, the Head of his Church, to favour us with an uninterrupted Peace and Union in our Church for the almoſt eighteen Years, that I have preached the Word of Salvation to you. By that bleſſed Peace, our Flock tho' exceeding ſmall, hath ſubſiſted, and even is enlarged by the addition of ſome who were once the Oppoſers of our Doctrine, I mean *Roman Catholicks*, ſeveral of whom have been here converted by the preaching of GOD's Word; and alſo by the addition of ſome Proteſtants of other Nations.

That you may proſper and grow in Grace, is the hearty Prayer to GOD of

Gentlemen,

and moſt dear Brethren,

in the Lord,

A. Le Mercier.

THE

PREFACE

in the Form of a

DIALOGUE

BETWEEN

Tertullus and the Author.

Tertullus.

SIR,

I Come to ask your Opinion & Thoughts concerning aConteſt I had yeſterday, with a Gentleman upon a point of Morality.

Author.

Since you come about that Conteſt, you will not take it amiſs, if I ask you the Occaſion of it.

Tertullus.

I will do more than that, for I will name you the Perſon with whom I diſputed. His Name is *Modeſtus*. I look upon him as a Man very ridiculous, in affecting a Sentiment very odd and peculiar to himſelf; for in a word, he maintain'd that Detraction was a great Sin

Author

Author.

I clearly perceive that you do not look upon it to be ſo, not only becauſe you diſputed with *Modeſtus* about that, but alſo becauſe you call him a ridiculous and odd Man, which you would not do I believe, if you were perſwaded that Detraction is a heinous Sin. For my own part, I muſt confeſs that I am of his Opinion, tho' you ſhould beſtow the ſame Titles upon me.

Tertullus.

I am not ignorant that Calumny, which is ſometimes comprehended under the Name and included under the Notion of Detraction is a Vice; but I cannot imagine that people Sin, when they only relate things that are true, and that if it were a great Sin ſo many People would chuſe to be guilty of it.

Author.

We may ſuppoſe indeed that among the great Number of Detractors, ſome do not look upon Evil-ſpeaking as a Sin, yet that Ignorance doth not excuſe them, becauſe it is willful; and that their favourable Thoughts of it proceeds from an evil Heart. As for your way of Arguing againſt me, from the great Number of Detractors, it certainly makes more againſt you, then againſt me. Is it not known to every Body that the generality of Mankind is more inclined to evil than to good? I will grant, that Evil-ſpeakers are to be met with

in

in all the Country's in the World, among both Sexes, in all Religions, in all the Ages and Conditions of Life, and almoſt in all Companies: and that it is even ſo much the more common, becauſe People are ſatisfy'd that it is very common: Men admiring fooliſhly every thing that is faſhionable. But as I ſaid before, that doth rather condemn than juſtify Detraction.

Tertullus.

Not only is it extreamly common in the World, but beſides, it is ſo rooted in the Hearts of many Perſons, that they ſeem to look upon it more like Virtue than a Vice.

Author.

You know that *Aretin* the famous, or rather infamous *Italian* Poet, was ſo given to that Vice, that it hath been ſaid of him, that he had ſpoken ill of every one but GOD, becauſe he did not know him; for which reaſon ſome ingenious Perſon made for him this Latin Epitaph,

Condit *Aretini* Cineres lapis iſte ſepultos,
Mortales atro qui ſale perfricuit.
Intactus Deus eſt illi, cauſamque rogatus,
Hanc dedit, ille, inquit, non mihi notus erat.

In Engliſh.

Beneath this Stone lie Aretine's *Remains,*
Who oft had plagu'd Mankind with biting Strains.
Ask'd by a Friend, how GOD his ſpight cou'd miſs;
Becauſe, ſaid he, I know not who that is.

As

As he was an Atheiſt, it is no very great wonder that he delighted in Evil ſpeaking and ſpared No-body, ſince he was afraid of no Puniſhment after this Life ; but it ſeems to me without Compariſon more ſurpriſing, that a Chriſtian, who believes there is a GOD, holy, juſt and a Puniſher of evil Words, dares to detract after that boundleſs Licenſe, which is obſerved among many who profeſs Chriſtianity.

Tertullus.

What, *Sir*, doth GOD forbid Detraction, as you ſeem to inſinuate it?

Author.

Yes, *Sir*, it is contrary to the Words of the Prophets, to the Rules of Jeſus Chriſt and of his Apoſtles, to the Law of GOD, as well as to that of Nature : and to ſatisfy you about it, you have but to reflect that it is contrary to the Commandment that GOD has imprinted in the Hearts of all his rational Creatures, that we ſhould deal with our Neighbours as we deſire they would deal with us. I might eaſily back this Argument by ſeveral others, but it would take up too much time ; therefore I refer you to a Treatiſe, which I intend ſhortly to publiſh upon this Subject. Till you may read it, I adviſe you as a Friend and exhort you as a Chriſtian not to detract any more ; ſince by ſo doing you run no Danger for your Salvation, not to ſay that by Detracting you ſhould lay great Obſtacles to the eternal Welfare of your Soul.

Tertullus.

Tertullus.

This Subject is of very great Importance and requires to be very exactly treated. For my own part, I shou'd be very glad to see a Volumn upon it, especially one coming from you. Yet Detraction prevails so greatly in the World, that I am afraid least the Trouble you take to dissuade Men from it, be entirely, or at least almost a Labour lost. And supposing that as you say, it be impossible to excuse or justify it, I believe it is much more impossible still to put a stop to it.

Author.

It is indeed very probable, that most of those that will read my Thoughts, will very little Regard them in such an Age as this, wherein Men have stony Hearts, itching Ears, and whose Tongue is a dard, a scourge, and a sword. For which Reason not perhaps fifty, or forty five, or forty, or thirty, or twenty, or ten of my Readers will improve my Directions; but if a single Person got good by it, and kept himself from Sin, as *Lot* did in *Sodom*, I should reckon my Time and Labour well spent; since by shunning this Sin with its Sources, he shall be in a good way to Heaven, and so infinite Happiness shall be secured to him, and a great Satisfaction procured to me, if by this or any other Means, I can procure so much good, and such unspeakable Advantages. What exceeding great Pleasure to me, if next to GOD, and with his Blessing, I, tho' dust and ashes, miserable and sinful Creature, can procure infinite Glory, everlasting

lasting Joy? *My Hearts Desire and Prayer to GOD for Israel is, that they be saved*: for I may truly apply to Christians, what *S. Paul* said of himself, *Rom.* 10. concerning the Jews of his Time. What can agree better with such a Prayer than the undertaking of a Work, the only Scope of which is, to keep Men from Sin & consequently from Damnation. That I may do this as effectually as I can, I will follow the Method which seems to me the most useful and likely to obtain the noble abovementioned end, by endeavouring to put a stop to the general Sources or Causes of this Sin. I find several, each of them shall be the Subject of a distinct Discourse or Section. I reckon Ignorance to be the first of those Sources. People detract because they have not a right Idea or Notion of Detraction. 2. Because they suppose wrongly, that several Things and Discourses are free from that Sin, into which they fall, tho' they do not do it willfully. 3. Because they do not know, or do not root out the Causes of that Vice. 4. Because they do not mind the various Degrees and the several Circumstances which oftentimes accompany and always aggravate it. 5. It is because they are not sensible of the heinousness of it. 6. Because they do not enough consider its dreadful Consequences and Effects. 7. As some are doubtful concerning certain particular Cases, they think it is all one to commit or to shun it: Or, Because there are some Exceptions to the general Rule against Detraction, they admit of no Exceptions, and detract in all sorts of Circumstances. 8. Because they flatter themselves that some trivolous

volous Objections generally alledged to favour Detraction, have more weight than all that can be ſaid againſt it. 9. *Becauſe* they do not call to Mind often and awfully enough, the ſtrong and great Motives that are capable to deter Men from Detracting. 10. *Becauſe* they do not uſe ſuitable Means and Ways to avoid it. Theſe ten Sources I will endeavour to open and afterwards to ſtop in ten Sections.

Tertullus.

It is a ſurpriſing thing to me, that altho' our Heart hath been ſo long ſince, the Object of the Study of Mankind, yet they are not come yet to the full Knowledge of it, in order to Reform it, and that there is Occaſion ſtill for new Treatiſes that deſcribe its depravity and the ways of purifying its Corruption. That makes me believe it hath an unfathomable Depth, and is a World, or Earth, in which new Lands are every Day to be found.

Author.

This is one of the principal Differences between the doctrinal and moral part of Religion. There are in the Doctrine, Myſteries and Abyſſes, which we cannot and muſt not dive into. On the contrary, We are ordered to examin our Hearts, in order to know and reform them. Yet thoſe Two Things are not to be ſeparated any more than our Underſtanding is diſtinct from our Will, which are both Faculties of the ſame human Soul. St. *Paul* ſaith

faith on the one side, that *without Faith, it is impossible to please GOD*; and St. *James* on the other that *Faith without Works is dead.* The Mystery of the Incarnation of the eternal Word, as well as several other Doctrines and Mysteries, afford us powerful Motives to Godliness & Charity, and that Charity is the ground of our Hope, which is a speculative, and not a practical Virtue.

Tertullus.

The Mysteries and moral Duties have each of them their Enemies; but it is certain that more Persons Sin against the moral Duties, than the Mysteries of our holy Religion, because there is no Body that performs exactly every thing, every Precept that is commanded in the moral Law, whereas several, entertain a right and just belief of the Articles and Mysteries of Faith.

Author.

Therefore it is very neeessary to write against those Sins which consist in the violation of the moral Duties, to reclaim from Vice, Hell and Misery those who are on the Brink of it, and just ready to fall into it through their Impenitence; that consideration moved me, to cast my Mite in the Lord's Treasury, I mean an Essay which I intend to publish against Detraction. The Conversation we have had upon that Head, shall be used by me as a Preface to it.

Tertullus.

Tertullus.

It is time then for us to conclude, and for me to be gone for fear of making the Preface too long by a more ample Converſation; and alſo that you may have more Time to meditate upon your ſubject.

Author.

If you pleaſe to ſtay, we ſhall ſpeak of other things.

Tertullus.

No *Sir*, I am obliged to you, and return you Thanks for your Directions and Exhortations. I will endeavour to improve them; and ſo I bid you farewell, and wiſh you good Succeſs.

Author.

Farewell then, Sir.

A

TABLE

Of the CONTENTS.

SECT. I.

THE Nature of Detraction is explained.

Article 1.

Detraction is defined, *pag.* 1.

Article 2.

Why many Persons often confound Detraction & Calumny, *p.* 4.

Article 3.

Flattery is opposed to Detraction, *p.* 6.

Article 4.

Of the Object of Detraction, *p.* 8.

The Uses of this Section, *p.* 9.

SECT. II.

In how many ways they detract; the diversity of those ways almost infinite. *p.* 11.

Article 1.

Of the Subject of Detraction, *p.* 13.

Article 2.

Of the Manner of Detraction as to it's Circumstances, *p.* 17.

Article 3.

Of the Means made use of in Detraction, *p.* 29.

Article 4.

Some other ways of detracting, *p.* 27.

The Uses of this Section, *p.* 31.

SECT. III.

Of the Sources of Detraction, *p.* 35.

Article 1.

Of the external Sources of Detraction, *p.* 36. 1. Source, *Prosperity*, *p.* 37. 2. Source, *frequent Examples*, *p.* 38.

A third Source, *Impunity*, *p.* 39. 4. Source, The *Facility of detracting*, *p.* 40. 5. Source, The *frequent Occasions we have for detracting*, *p.* 40.

Article 2.

Of the internal Sources of Detraction. 1. Source, *original Sin*, *pag.* 41. 2. Source, *Idleness*, *p.* 43. 3. Source, *Impudence*, * *p.* 45. 4. Source, The *itch of Talking*, *p.* 46. 5. Source, *Drunkenness*, *p.* 47. 6. Source, A *soft and effeminate Complaisance*, *p.* 48. 7. Source, A *contradictory Spirit*, *p.* 48. 8. Source, *Levity & Caprice*, *p.* 49 9. Source, *Rash Judgments*, *p.* 49. 10. Source, *Curiosity*, *p.* 50. 11. Source, *Contempt*, *p.* 51. 12. Source, The *Corruption and Inhumanity of Detractors*, *p.* 52. 13. Source, *Ingratitude*, *p.* 54. 14. Source, *Interest and Covetousness*, *p.* 54. 15. Source, *Hypocrisy*, *p.* 56. 16. Source, A *false and blind Zeal*, *p.* 58. 17. Source, *Jealousy*, *p.* 60. 18. Source, *Pride and sinful Self-Love*, *p.* 61. 19. Source, *Wrath*, *p.* 68. 20. Source, *Revenge*, *p.* 71.

Article 3.

Reflections on what hath been said in this Section, *p.* 72. The Uses of this Section, *p.* 74.

SECT. IV.

Wherein is proved that Detraction is a Sin.

Article 1.

The Law of GOD expressly forbids it, *p.* 78.

Article 2.

Wherein it is proved that Detraction is a Sin, by consequences drawn from Passages out of the Old Testament. *p.* 81.

Article 3.

Detraction proved to be a Sin, by Passages of the New-Testament, *p.* 87.

Article 4.

That some of the particular ways of detracting are Sins, *p.* 90. Of *Stories*, *p.* 91. Of *Raillery*, *p.* 91. Of *Outrages* and *Reproaches*, *p.* 92.

Article 5.

Detraction is contrary to Charity, *p.* 93.

---

* This Third Source doth not differ much from the Eighteenth.

Article

Article 6.
Detraction is contrary to Juſtice, and therefore a Sin, *p.* 99.
Article 7.
Detraction is contrary to the Attributes of GOD, and is one of the Characters of the Devil, *p.* 99.
Article 8.
Detraction is contrary to the Deſigns of GOD, in giving us the Faculty of Speech, *p.* 102.
Article 9.
Detraction is contrary to human Civility, *p.* 104.
Article 10.
Detraction is a mean vile Sin, *p.* 105.
Article 11.
Detractors are ordinarily more faulty than thoſe they talk of, *p.* 108.
Article 12.
The greatneſs of this Sin ſhown by ſome farther Conſiderations, *p.* 111.
Article 13.
We are not well aware of the greatneſs of this Sin, *p.* 114.
The Uſes of this Section, *p.* 116.
SECT. IV.
Of the various Circumſtances which aggravate this Sin, *p.* 120.
Article 1.
Of the Circumſtances with reſpect to the Perſons detracted, *p.* 120. Circumſtance 1ſt, Of *Parents* and *Children*, *p.* 120. Circumſtance 2d, Of *Brothers*, *p.* 122. Circumſtance 3d, Of *Husbands and Wives*, *p.* 124. Circumſtance 4th, Of *Sovereigns and their Subjects*, *p.* 126. Circumſtance 5th, Concerning *Miniſters and their People*, *p.* 129. Circumſtance 6th, Concerning *Benefactors*, *p.* 131. Circumſtance 7th, Concerning *Maſters* and *Servants*, *p.* 132. Circumſtance 8th, Concerning *Friends*, *p.* 132. Circumſtance 9th, Concerning *religious* or *civil Relations*, 134. Circumſtance 10th, Concerning Perſons *afflicted*, *p.* 134.
Article 2.
Of the aggravating Circumſtances with regard to Detractors in particular. Circumſtance 1. To be the *firſt Author of Detraction*, *p* 131. Circumſtance 2d, To *Name the Perſons that have been backbitten*, *p.* 137.

Article 3.

Of the aggravating Circumstances with regard to the manner of detracting. Circumstance 1. *Rash Judgments*, *p.* 138. Circumstance 2d, To *write the Detraction*, *p.* 139.

Article 4.

Of the Circumstances that aggravate Detraction with regard to the Vices and Sins we publish. Circumstance 1st, To *deride bodily Defects*, *p.* 140. Circumstance 2d, To *detract from those whom violent Passions or Persecutions have caused to Sin*, *p.* 144. Circumstance 3d, To *mention Sins that have been repented of*, *p.* 145 Circumstance 4th, To *mention what is most hurtful to our Neighbour's Reputation*, *p.* 145. Circumstance 5th, To *mention those Sins, the speaking of which is forbidden*, *p.* 146.

Article 5.

Time and Place may aggravate the Horror of Detraction, *p.* 147.

The Uses of this Section, *p.* 149.

SECT. VI.

Of the Effects of Detraction, *p.* 151.

Article 1.

Of the Effects of Detraction, as referring to Detractors, while in this World, 1. It *spoils their Judgment*, *p.* 151. 2. It *hurts their Reputation*, 153. 3. They *are hated*, *p.* 155.

Article 2.

Of the Effects of Detraction with regard to our Neighbours, and first, As to those who are spoken ill of; *It hurts their Credit, and oftentimes their Soul*, *p.* 161.

Article 3.

Detraction is hurtful to those that hear us detract, *p.* 164.

Article 4.

Detraction is sometimes fatal to the Common-wealth and Society, *p.* 167.

Article 5.

Detraction is hurtful to the Church, *p.* 170.

Article 6.

Of the sorrowful Effects of Detraction with regard to the next World, *p.* 176.

The Uses of this Section, *p.* 178.

SECT

SECT. VII.

Wherein some Doubts and Cases of Conscience are resolved; and 'tis shewn, that all Detraction is not a Sin. 1st Case, It may be done sometimes in Justice and Charity, *p.* 182. 2d Case, It is oftentimes lawful to speak ill of the Dead, *p.* 182. 3d Case, It is also lawful to speak ill of Nations and whole Bodies, *p.* 184. 4th Case, Railleries are sometimes lawful and sometimes not, *p.* 185. 5th Case, Concerning Parents and their Children, *p.* 186. 6th Case, Pastors may be acquainted with the Faults of their People, as well as Parents with those of their Children, *p.* 187. 7th Case, Excommunication is no criminal Detraction. 8th Case, Magistrates may be acquainted with the Breakers of their Laws, *p.* 188. 9th Case, One may speak ill of a false Religion, *p.* 190. 10th Case, It is lawful to vindicate one's self, tho' another Person's Character suffers by it, *p.* 192. 11th Case, What must be done, when of two Persons we must speak ill of one, *p.* 198. 12th Case, Concerning Satyrs, When they are lawful, *p.* 199. 13th Case, One should not mention those Vices that Sinners do glory in, *p.* 200. 14th Case, A Person should not speak ill of himself, *p.* 201. 15th Case, One should not mention a Man's bad Qualities after he hath mentioned his good Ones, *p.* 203. 16th Case, We may and ought to mention Men's Faults, when we cannot avoid it without telling Lyes, *p.* 204. 17th Case, What must be done, when in order to clear one Man we are obliged to accuse another, *p.* 204. 18th Case, The vileness and meanness of a Person is no Excuse to speak Ill of him or her, *p.* 204. 19th Case, Neither the Ignorance of Right nor the Ignorance of Fact excuses a Detractor, *p.* 206. 20th Case, We must not reveal Secrets, *p.* 208.

The Uses of this Section, *p.* 210.

SECT. VIII.

Objections made in favour of Detraction answered, *p.* 111. 1st Objection, Detraction may serve to make People reform, *p.* 112. 2d Obj. If we do not detract when others do, we shall get an ill Name, *p.* 115. 3d Obj. We must conform to Custom, *p.* 219. 4th Obj. If we do not detract, we shall hardly have any thing to talk of, *p.* 222. 5th Obj. We shall lose, if we do not detract, the Company

pany and Friendſhip of many Perſons, *p.* 224. 6th Obj. We have in the Bible, the Examples of ſeveral pious Perſons who have detracted, *p.* 225. 7th Obj. We may be ſaid to favour the Faults of a Perſon, if we do not ſpeak ill of him when others do, *p.* 226. 8th Obj. It is well known to every Body that no Perſon is free from Infirmities, *p.* 226.. 9th Obj. It is lawful and a Duty to tell the Truth, *p.* 227. 10th Obj. It is ſometimes for the publick Good to detract, *p.* 228. 11th Obj. Why ſhould not People talk of Faults that are known to every Body, *p.* 231. 12th Obj. Charity is not blind, *p.* 232. 13th Obj. One cannot help to utter a fine witty Expreſſion, when it comes to mind, *p.* 233. Obj. 14th, Some Perſons are ſo very bad and malicious, that they do not deſerve to be ſpared and pityed, *p.* 237.

The Uſes of this Section, *p.* 239.

SECT. IX.

Motives to avoid this Sin: 1ſt Motive, The badneſs of the Sources that produce it, *p.* 242. 2d Motive, Detractors are conſcious, that they are Sinners themſelves, *p.* 243. 3d Motive, All Men ſhould love one another as Brethren, *p.* 248. 4th Motive, It is an eaſy thing to abſtain from evil ſpeaking, 249. 5th Motive, To abſtain from it will preſerve our Reputation, *p.* 250. 6th Motive, It will gain us the eſteem and good Will of People, *p.* 252. 7th Motive, By evil ſpeaking we render our ſelves inexcuſable, *p.* 253. 8th Motive, Our Tongue is defiled by evil-ſpeaking, *p.* 254. 9th Motive, Some Circumſtances concerning Perſons and their Faults, *p.* 255. 10th Motive, The very great Damage done to our Neighbour, by our ſpeaking againſt him, *p.* 251. 11th Motive. Great many Circumſtances often leſſen his Faults, *p.* 257. 12th Motive, Our abſtaining from Detraction will make GOD favourable to us, *p.* 258. 13th Motive, If we refrain from detracting we may alſo from a great many other Vices, *p.* 260. 14th Motive, Examples and Conduct of eminent and godly Perſons, *p.* 262.

The Uſes of this Section, *p.* 266.

SECT. X.

Containing many Duties and Counſels concerning Detraction. *p.* 267.

Article 1.

Duties and Counſels to thoſe who deſire to avoid Detraction, *p.* 267. *Articl*

Article 2.
The Duties of thoſe who are fallen into Detraction, *p.* 275.
Article 3.
The Duty of thoſe in preſence of whom People have detracted, *p.* 277.
Article 4.
The Duties of thoſe who are ſpoken ill of. *p.* 288.
The Uſes of this Section, *p.* 298.
The Concluſion of this Treatiſe.

ERRATA.

PAge 2 line 12 put a full Stop after the Word, are, and none after. p. 6 l. 6 read, rather than Detraction. p. 16 l. 12. read, any thing. p. 27 laſt l. read, but a Thouſand p. 37 l. 9 read heard. l. 28 read by them p. 49 After Eighth Source read Levity & Caprice. p. 56 inſtead of Fourteenth Source, read Fifteenth Source p 70 l. 29 read but al tho'. p. 76 l. 11 read but think that. p. 81 l. 17 read one of the Pleaſures of Life. l. 18 read by deſtroying the good Opinion People had of them before they heard of thoſe Faults, which however are often inſeparable from human Nature. p. 84 l. 2 read advance. p. 91 l. 17 read faithful. p. 97 l. 6 read his. p. 108 l. 2 read all the thinking part of Mankind. p 114 read Article XIII. l. 2 read on or near his Table. p 154 l 26 read hurt. p 158 read afford moſt Men. l 8 read inſtead of ſtill farther, read and nothing, &c. p 168 l 4 inſtead of whereby, read and. l 15 read The Rulers of a State, inſtead of, The Princes of a Kingdom. p 172 l. 16 read expect inſtead of pretend, p. 178 l 16 read ſinful againſt GOD. p 183 l 24 for Smoak read Vapour. p 199 l 26 read thoſe, inſtead of theſe. p 201 l 6 read ſuch a Man. l 11 read him for his. p 207 l 22 read but yet I ſay, inſtead of, to this I anſwer. l 24 read ſome Attention, p 209 read, impoſſible to me, &c. p 210 l. 2 read ſometimes inſtead of generally, & ſome inſtead of very. p 230 l 29 read ſort of Criminals. p 263 l 15 read and even without Detractions. l 14 read thoſe inſtead of theſe. p 278 l 24 [read Meſſias inſtead of Miſeries

I take often in this Treatiſe the Word, Self-Love, for that which ſinful, though Self Love in it ſelf be innocent and natural.

I Muſt deſire the Reader to excuſe ſome Phraſes that may be improper or obſcure. As this Work was firſt compoſed in the French *Language, and the Tranſlation is kept very cloſe to the* French, *the turn and genius of which differs conſiderably from the* Engliſh, *from thence proceed that improperty or obſcurity perhaps in few of the Sentences. As to the Work it ſelf, Some People will perhaps blame me for being too particular, and mentioning trifling Things; but I muſt beg of them to conſider that to write Treatiſes of Morality in a general way only, and to write nothing, is almoſt the ſame Thing. If we pretend to convince and convert Men, we muſt do it by entring as it were into their very Heart, and making them ſenſible of all their Miſtakes, and as they are very various, and numerous in order to examine and confute them, we are obliged to be very particular, as I have been in this Work, tho' I hope not to a Fault.*

A

TREATISE

AGAINST

DETRACTION.

SECTION I.

ARTICLE *I.*

Detraction *is defined.*

THE Heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked, who can know it? saith the Prophet *Jeremiah. Paul* tells us also that *no man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him:* So that that Heart which hardly knoweth it self would be quite unsearchable to

SECT. I.

Chap. 17. ver. 9.

1 Cor. 2. 11.

SECT. I. other Hearts, if it did not discover it's Passions, it's Sentiments and Designs to others. This he does very often by his detracting *Words*: *Out of the abundance of the Heart, the Mouth speaketh.* Therefore when you hear any one speaking against his Neighbour, it is not a hard matter to guess how he stands affected towards him. And as detracting Speeches are very common in the Mouth of Men, it is both the most usual & most sure way to know what their Thoughts are for.

Matth. 12 34.

Detraction, as we understand and use that Word in this Book, is a Sin which consists in *telling to one, or several Persons, without Necessity, true Things which hurt the good Name of our Neighbours*; whatever Means and Ways may be used to accomplish that.

I say, in the *first* Place, that this Sin consists in *relating Things that are true, and are hurtful to our Neighbours*, in order to distinguish it from *Calumny*, which consists in *inventing and telling of and against them, Things that are false.* Some have called the Detraction that we speak of, *Uncharitable Truth*, whereas Slanders and Calumnies are *uncharitable Untruths.* The Words uncharitable Truth, do express so well the Nature of Detraction, that we may say, that the very Name is the Definition of

the

the Thing defined, nothing being more contrary to Charity than Detraction. SECT. I.

I say, in the *second* Place, that it doth not only consist in telling or speaking Things hurtful to the Character of our Neighbours, because, tho' the Words *Evil-speaking*, properly have a Relation to Words and Discourses only, yet it is certain, that we must comprehend under the Idea or Notion of Back-biting, every Thing that may have the same Effect as Discourses, *viz.* To *hurt his good Name.*

We intend to explain this Definition more at large afterwards; but in the mean while, it is necessary to observe here, that it may happen that the mentioning of certain Actions may sometimes be sinful, when said of certain Persons, whereas it may be innocent if said of others, because these Actions may be good or bad, according to the several Circumstances of Persons or Places or Times, by whom, or in which they have been done. For Instance, It would be an uncharitable Truth, and consequently a Sin, to say that such a *Mussulman* or *Turk*, as we call those that follow the false Doctrine of *Mahomet*, hath drank some Wine, because the Law of that false Prophet forbids it; whereas on the contrary, it is not a Detraction, if speaking of a *Christian*, you say that he

SECT. I. hath drank Wine moderately, because every Body knows that the Gospel doth not forbid the Use, but the Excess of that Liquor; so that it hurts not the Character of this, but only the Character of the *Mahometan*, to say that he hath drank Wine, tho' moderately: As also it is an uncharitable Truth to say of a *Roman Catholick*, that he never goes to *Mass*; whereas it would be uncharitable to say of a *Protestant*, that he ever goes or went to *Mass*; because the one by his Principles is obliged to go, and the other by contrary Principles, is bound not to go to *Mass*.

ARTICLE *II.*

Why many Persons often confound Detraction *and* Calumny?

IN the foregoing Article we have endeavoured to shew the *difference* there is between *Detraction* & *Calumny*. Nevertheless it is very usual to see not only the common People, but even those who think themselves far above them, join or confound these two together very unjustly. I believe the Reason hereof may be gather'd from the two following Considerations, which it may be proper to mention,

tion, that so when we know from whence the Error arises, we may the more easily guard against both it and its Consequences. SECT. I.

1. The first Reason is, *That in most of the dead and living Languages, the same Terms very frequently signify both the one and the other of these Sins:* And to mention the Language in which I am writing, the word *Detraction* signifies as well *Calumny* as simple *Back-biting*. The Terms being so near alike, we are apt to speak in the very same manner of things quite different.

2. A second Reason is, because *the Holy Scripture it self seems to confound them together*, in many Places too long here to be mentioned. The Reason now alledged may be one of the Causes hereof; to which I may joyn the following ones, and illustrate them by an Example, even that of the holy Apostle *James*. He opposes these two Sins in several Places of his Epistle by the very same Arguments. (1) Because they are *equally* the Fruits of a dead Faith. (2) Because they are equally committed by the same mean of the Tongue. (3) Because they are both contrary to Charity. And (4) Because their Effects are very near the same. Upon these Accounts we are very apt to confound them together.

Allowing my self this Liberty, I shall make use of those Texts which may be e-

Sect. I. qually alledged againſt Calumny and Detraction; yet for fear of confounding two matters, which are as oppoſite as *Truth* and *Falſity*, I ſhall let alone thoſe where I think the ſacred Authors had *Calumny* in View rather *Detraction*, or which might puzzle and perplex the Reader's Mind. Nevertheleſs it muſt be obſerved, that what we ſhall ſay againſt Detraction, will ſo much the more condemn Calumny, inaſmuch as this laſt is a *Lye*, and conſequently a Sin added to the firſt, being thus a Degree of Malice above it.

ARTICLE *III.*

Flattery *is oppoſed to* Detraction.

ONE of the moſt proper ways to know the Nature of a thing is to oppoſe it to what is contrary thereto. In natural things we find out the *Levity* of one Body by the Oppoſition it has to the *Gravity* of another. In Morality the way to know the Weight of a Sin is the very ſame. Thus we hope to illuſtrate our Subject, by ſhewing how Detraction is oppoſed to another Vice, at the ſame Time that we are proving how it is oppoſed to the Holineſs and the Laws of GOD, to which all Sins are directly contrary. You will hereby at leaſt obſerve, that in order to acquire

acquire one ſingle Virtue a Man muſt often ſhun more then one Vice: Beſides that in order to know whether he be in a juſt Medium, wherein a recommended Virtue ordinarily conſiſts, he muſt diligently obſerve the two Extremities and lay them together to find the Center. SECT. I.

Flattery is oppoſed to *Detraction*, and both to *Charity*, which is the happy Medium betwixt them.

Theſe two Vices have oppoſite Views, inaſmuch as Detraction is a *Truth* which vexes our Neighbours, and tends to trouble them, whereas Flattery is generally a *Lye* invented to pleaſe them. The one deſtroys by *Sword*, the other by *Poiſon*: Both are contrary to *Charity*, which forbids us to ſpeak ill of others, thereby to defame them, and contrarywiſe to flatter them, thereby to engage them to go on in their vicious ways, and hinder them from becoming virtuous, by making them believe they are ſo already. It is evident that Charity holds a middle betwixt theſe two things, which nevertheleſs have this in Common, that they are made uſe of for the very ſame Ends, on certain Occaſions. Sometimes we Back-bite Perſons in order to raiſe our ſelves above them; at other times we Flatter Perſons, ſo that by the return of a Flattering Complement, they may liſt us above other Men. Thus *ſelf-*

Sect. I. *love* wou'd be applauded by ways entirely different.

ARTICLE *IV.*

Of the Object *of* Detraction.

AS on the one hand, all the World is capable of Detraction, so on the other, the *Object* of Detraction is very universal; because we may speak evil of *all Men*, none being faultless. Among all the Sins whereby we can injure our Neighbours, there is none which may be extended so far or to so great a number of Objects as Detraction. When for instance, Children break the Command which enjoins them to honour their Parents, they sin only against two Persons. When a Person is addicted to Theft, he has neither Power nor Opportunity sufficient to hurt a great many Persons, and generally an ignominious Death puts an End to his evil Designs. The same may be said of Murder. But Detraction not being punish'd by the Magistrate, and Power, Opportunity and humane Faults being never wanting to Backbiters, it follows, that *all the World* affords a Mark for Detraction.

There

There are none but those who dwell in Heavenly Mansions, of whom it is impossible to speak ill, because they are perfectly holy. This is what the Scripture assures us with respect to GOD in a great many Places. *He is of purer Eyes than to behold Evil*, far from committing it. I own, there are Persons Wicked, or rather Mad enough, to find fault with the Divine Conduct, and to say as the *Jews* in *Ezekiel*, *the ways of the Lord are not Equal.* But what do they then say? They pronounce an horrible *Blasphemy* and not a Detraction. Those are, these unhappy ones *who know not GOD, and speak Evil of what they understand not.* As for Angels and the Spirits of just Men made perfect, the Scripture makes their continual Employment and perfect Felicity to consist, in an exact Obedience to the Orders of the Lord; thus they live exempt from all those Faults which are blamed in the Inhabitants of the Earth.

SECT. I.

Hab. 1. 13.

Chap. 18. ver. 25.

Jude ver. 10.

Heb. 12. 23.

The Uses *of this Section.*

Altho' we have not as yet fully proved, that the Vice we are disputing against is a Sin, yet as we have already shewn, that it is contrary to Charity, this gives us sufficient Reason to warn and exhort you to forsake it. What we have already said of its

SECT. I. its Nature may serve for this, that it should make us forsake it. If any have formerly committed it without knowing it, let them now know it without committing it. Let those who before knew what it was, at length cease sinning against their Light, and let what we have said, be as a Clap of Thunder to awaken them from their Drowsiness. Let the one and the other fully and entirely quit this Sin. In most Subjects of Morality, Virtue consists in a Medium, but in Vice this Medium is dangerous. Virtue is found in an extremity beyond the very bounds of Vice. So that if you suppose a Man, who very often Detracts, another who does it but seldom, and a third, who never does, this last alone shall have *chosen the good Part*. I say this, because there are many who look upon themselves as very wise & moderate Persons, when they tell only part of what they know against their Neighbours, in which they are very much mistaken.

Luk. 10. 42.

Since Flattery is as far from Charity, as Charity is from Detraction, let us avoid both Crimes with the same Care. Truly what matter is it to the Devil, whether we perish by Fire or Water, so that we do but Perish. For this Reason it was that he sometimes cast the *Lunatick* mentioned in the Gospel, into one Element, and sometimes into the other. If we will not

Matth. 17. 15.

Back-

Back-bite Persons for fear of offending them, no more ought we to give them undue Praises, lest if they be modest, it grieve them, or if they are not, it make them the prouder. SECT. I.

In a Word, as we may flatter or blame all Mankind, let us see to it, that we act not after this manner with regard to any one.

SECTION II.

In how many ways they Detract.

The diversity of these ways almost infinite.

THERE are almost as many ways of Detracting, as there are Detractors; every one differently expressing his Detractions according to his own Genius and turn of Mind. And on the other side, these ways are still various according the different and numerous Failings of the Persons talked of; so that I don't believe *the whole World cou'd contain the Books which might be written* Joh. 21. 25. SECT. II.

SECT. II. *ten* on this Subject. This is a great deal, but not too much, to say thereof, since a good part of the Discourses of our Ancestors, and of own, has been and is but Detraction differently modified.

I shall not therefore here pretend to relate all the ways that are customarily made use of to blame our Neighbours: This would be impossible: Moreover, the Practice of the World, and the Study of your own Heart, may supply what we shall omit. Only we must observe to you, that the most witty Methods are the most dangerous. It seems we swallow a *Pill* when gilded with less Reluctancy, and we take more Pleasure in divulging a Detraction, when we think there is Wit in it; whether it be to shew that we have some ourselves, or to please those in whose presence we Detract by diverting them; yea, so far is this Method carried, that there are those, who adding *Lying* to *Detraction*, and *Impudence* to these two Sins, falsly call themselves the Authors of some sharp and keen Expression.

That this Section may be treated with all possible Order, we shall here consider three principal things. The *Manner* in which we Detract has regard (1) To the *Subject* and *Matter* of Detraction. (2) To the *Circumstances*. And (3) To the *Means themselves* made use of.

A R-

SECT. II.

ARTICLE I.

Of the Subject *of* Detraction.

IN what way ſoever we conſider Man, we ſhall always meet with a Subject of Detraction, and ſomething to find fault with in him. If he be in Proſperity, he then forgets GOD. If in Adverſity, he forgets himſelf, and falls into Murmuring. The Rich Man we ſee proud, the poor Man impatient; the young Man is debauch'd and haſty; the Old Man coveteous and peeviſh. Sickneſs & Health, Liberty and Slavery are equally abus'd by Man. Whether we look upon him in a ſtate of Action or in a ſtate free from Action, we ſhall ſtill find him a Sinner. Lazineſs, Sluggiſhneſs and Idleneſs are Vices; and his Actions may be, and often are great Sins. Who doubts hereof? Who does not ſee it? Conſider him according to the various ſtates wherein he paſſes his Life, and you will ſee him a conceited Clergyman, a mercenary Warrior, an unjuſt Judge, a Deceitfull Merchant. What might we not further ſay of him, were we ſo minded? But however we will ſay no more, and acknowledge, that there are many Perſons free from the Blemiſhes common to the various

SECT. II. various Employments and different Circumſtances of Life.

To be a little more particular in reſpect to the Defects which we blame in others, I ſay, that we may ſpeak ill of thoſe of their Minds, their Hearts and their Perſons. Thus as to the *Mind*, we call a Man ignorant, ſtupid, indiſcreet, injudicious, fantaſtical, wavering, ſelf-conceited, *&c.* As to his *Heart*, we reckon him mean-ſpirited, paſſionate, haſty, mercenary, cowardly, looſe, vain, preſumptuous, enflamed with a filthy Love, retaining implacable Hatred, that leaves no Stone unturn'd to ſatisfy his Revenge, whoſe Appetite to every thing forbidden by the divine Law, is the Source of a thouſand Sins. We may alſo ſpeak Evil of his *Words* and *Actions*: That his *Words* are full of Blaſphemy, Calumny, Detraction, Filth and Oaths, *&c.* That his *Actions* are hypocritical, ſacrilegious, unjuſt and cruel. Nay, his very *Silence* may be miſconſtrued by us: That he refrained ſpeaking, when he ought to have ſpoke, which, ſay we, is a Mark of Imprudence, Ignorance, or ſome other Fault.

We may alſo backbite a Man, by ſpeaking ill of his *Writings* without cauſe. And truly we had as good attack the *Man* as his *Works*, in which we may pick the ſame Faults, as in his *Mind* and *Heart*, ſince

since they are the Production of the one, and set forth the Sentiments of the other. In them also we may meet with, and censure all the *Faults* of *Discourse*, since *Books* are only what a Person has, or may have talk'd of before. SECT. II.

A Man's *Body* may be the Subject of Detraction, either on account of it's natural Defects, or odd Postures. For Example, His Looks may be lascivous, his Gaite haughty, his Garb indecent. We may even detract and backbite Persons on Account of their *Birth*, 1. As being *Upstarts* and of *mean* Original. 2. When they are obliged for their Birth to some *Crime* of their Parents; such is that of all *spurious* Births. 3. When their Ancestors or Parents have committed those publick Crimes which dishonour a Family.

We may speak Evil not only of the *Living*, but even of the *Dead*: hence the saying, that DETRACTION BURYS THE LIVING AND RAKES UP THE DEAD. And truly there never is so much matter of speaking Ill of any Man during Life, as after it; seeing then one may talk of his whole Life, even to his last moments: And moreover, how many Subjects for Detraction do many Persons give even in Death? Many die without restoring ill-gotten Goods, without forgiving their Brethren, without truly repenting

Sect. II. repenting, without ſeriouſly thinking on Heaven and Hell, and without duly reflecting, that after Death comes the Judgment.

We ſhall finiſh this Article with three Remarks. 1. *That all manner of Subjects may be turned into Detraction by Detractors.* This is a Fire which all ſorts of Matter kindles when blown up. They know how to turn this way, things that are the moſt indifferent in themſelves and the moſt diſtant in appearance from this Subject. We can't talk of nothing before them, but what they will make Applications, and from whence they will draw Conſequences, againſt thoſe whom they dön't love. 2. *That Detracting Diſcourſes may be occaſioned either by a premeditated Deſign of an Evil Heart, or by the Example and Converſation of others, or by ſome other things, which bring Perſons & their Defects to remembrance.* It often happens, that as ſoon as a Perſon is gone out of the Company, his Behaviour is brought on the Carpet, and examin'd with the utmoſt Rigour. 3. *That there are Things* indifferent *in themſelves, that is to ſay, which are not Faults in their own Nature, which ſtill may do an injury on certain Occaſions, ſo that it would be Back-biting to mention them without Neceſſity.* For Inſtance, altho' Poverty be

not

not a Vice, yet there are Occasions wherein it wou'd greatly, to say that *he was Poor*. Charity requires, that at such a time we shou'd lay nothing at all of his Estate. SECT. II.

ARTICLE *II.*

Of the Manner of Detraction as to it's Circumstances.

1. THE first of these Circumstances is, That we utter some things which we know of our selves, and other Things which we know only by the Testimony and Report of other Men. I did not see, says a Man, the Thing with my own Eyes; but you need not doubt of it a whit the more for that. This Account comes to me from a good Hand, and a Person that I would trust as soon as my self.

2. We may detract from Persons in their *Presence*, either when we address our selves to them, (and this is stiled reviling a Man to his Face,) or when we speak of them in addressing our selves to others.

3. In their *Absence* we may back-bite Persons; and this is the most common and ordinary way: Whether it be, that we are afraid, that those to whom and of whom we are speaking, will make some

SECT. II. cutting Anſwer, and with violence caſt back the Arrows ſhot againſt them, on the Shooters: Or, Becauſe we conſider that good Manners won't allow us to vex a whole Company with mutual Jarrs. Perhaps Cowardice may hinder ſome from telling Perſons of their Faults to their Face, or ſome other peculiar Reaſons.

4. Men may detract *publickly* and without reſerve. Thus haſty and giddy-headed Perſons act, who tell every one all that they know. 'Tis all one to them, who they talk to, neither do they care whether the Perſon, whoſe Reputation they wou'd blaſt, be known or unknown to them.

5. On the other hand, Men may detract in appearance more *ſecretly*, tho' in the end more publickly. I tell you this, (ſays one Man to another) becauſe you are my Friend; but I ſhould be very ſorry that any Body ſhould know this Story came from me. I tell it to you as a *ſecret*, and beg you'd not divulge it. But however, if you ſhould happen to mention it, don't bring me for your Author, for you will certainly meet with the Diſappointment of ſeeing me deny, that I ever told you any ſuch Thing.

It muſt be owned, that this is but a Trick to ſpread News the further; becauſe, As we communicate the Secret by way

way of Favour, he who hears it, thinks to do as great a Favour to others, whom he acquaints with it, and to gain their Confidence and Friendſhip. Theſe latter have the ſame Views with the former; and after this manner every one befriends his Neighbour, till the Thing is wholly publick. Moreover, How can any one imagine, that another will keep a Secret, which he himſelf could not help diſcovering? SECT. II.

6. We may detract by relating Things which concern thoſe to whom we relate them. (Theſe Men are called *Tale-bearers.*) Or when we tell Things to thoſe who have no Concern in them.

7. We may detract directly, *openly* and by calling Things, as we ſay, by their Name. Many even call this Freedom: But we muſt confeſs that this is ſo far from being a Virtue, that on the contrary it is a very great Sin. This is to abuſe *Words*, that ſo afterwards we may abuſe *Things*. Let us then be more reſerved, when we treat of our Neighbour's Reputation.

8. We may detract *indirectly* and *obliquely*; As, (1.) By Equivocations, either in Words, or in the Senſe of a Phraſe. It would be needleſs to ſtop here, in order to over-throw the Cauſe of Equivocations in Words, which are ſeldom uſed, but among the Rabble. It is to be wiſh'd

SECT. II. that Detraction it self were as much condemn'd by the World, as this way of detracting. (2.) We may covertly speak Ill of a Person under the disguise of Fables and Parables. Thus *Jotham* compar'd *Abimelech* to a *Bramble*, and applied it's Qualities to him. (3.) We may back-bite a Person indirectly, when we speak evil in general of those, with whom he has any thing in common. For Example, If we say, that all the Officers in such a Regiment performed their Duty very ill, we do certainly back-bite every one in particular, for he that speaks Evil of all, excepts none. And yet this is done indirectly, no one being expressly named.

Judges ch. 9.

ARTICLE *III.*

Of the Means *made Use of in Detraction.*

THE remainder of this Section shall be employed in particularizing the various Means made use of for Detraction.

1. We may detract in a large and general way, by saying, That the Person we are talking of, has a very ill Character abroad; that he is subject to a great many Vices; without mentioning so much as one in particular.

2. We

2. We may detract in many Words, or in one single Word. Such a Man say we, is an Usurer, Infamous, a Glutton, *&c.* Now this one Word, makes as much or more impression on the Hearers, as if we drew a Picture of his evil Life at length. Besides that, Detractors of this sort, are very easily urged to enter into a detail of the Usuries, Infamies and Gluttonies, which they mentioned in one single Word.

3. When we will not name the Crime of the Person we talk of, but leave the Hearer to guess what it is, under pretence, that Charity obliges us to hide the greatness of the Crime; so that by this expressive Silence others often esteem it greater than it really is. O *Diabolical* Charity!

4. When we don't name the Person; but say, it is one, whom you know very well, has done such and such Things: But as we know many capable of having done them, we thereupon suspect a great Number, which is so much the more dangerous, as this Discourse affords room for various rash Judgments in the Mind of the Hearer, and as this Detraction comprehends many Objects at once. Add to all this, that those who hear us speak thus, suffer themselves to be easily perswaded, thinking that it is thro' Love or Compassion, that we conceal the Name of the Evil-Doer.

SECT. II. But as *Solomon* ſays, *The tender Mercies of the Wicked are cruel.*
Pro. 12. 10.

5. One way of Detraction is to jeer, expoſe and ridicule any one before a Company. Without this, ſay ſome, Converſation wou'd languiſh, and we ought to keep that up at any rate whatever. But what is the Conſequence of this? Many Times, two of the Company are the Actors in the Scene, and the reſt are Spectators. He who is not the beſt, but who has the moſt ſprightly Wit, falls upon him whom he judges the weakeſt among 'em. He endeavours to puzzle him in his Anſwers; to make him either quite ſilent, or fall into a Paſſion, by burleſque & cutting Compariſons, and render him the Jeſt of the whole Company. Thus it becomes a kind of Tragi-Comedy, where ſome are merry, others ſad. Sometimes all the Spectators become Actors; which is ſo much the more lamentable, as there are then no Mediators to pacify the Troubles.

6. It is a kind of Detraction to make Perſons publickly confeſs their Faults, by demanding of them, whether they did not do ſuch and ſuch an evil Action. I own there are but very few who have ſincerity enough to own they were guilty of it; but then we are the Occaſion of their lying.

7. We

7. We detract when we give Reproofs and Exhortations, which may discover to those present, that he whom we talk to, has need of them, with reference to his past evil Conduct. This is far from the Advice given us in the 30th Chap. of *Proverbs*, *Accuse not a Servant before his Master, lest he curse thee and thou be found guilty.* We may extend this Precept still further, and apply it to all those who give their Reproofs, in Presence of those who ought not to assist therein. I here except the Men who give their Reproofs in the Pulpit, 1. Because they reprove only when they think there is a necessity therefor. 2. Because that since they speak in general, we can't say they aim'd at some particular Persons. 3. Suppose they do speak against some Vice, which many of their Hearers know others subject to, they then tell them nothing new. 4. The Prophets, our Lord JESUS CHRIST and his Apostles, have approved of these sorts of Censures, by their own Practice. SECT. II. Ver. 10.

What I find very intolerable and foolish in some Persons is, to detract by exhorting and counselling others not to do so. Don't you detract (say these Men to others) as such an one has done, and thereby brought himself into troublesome Affairs.

8. *Anathemas* are ever Detractions, tho' not always Sins, being permitted to

Sect. II. the Guides of the Churches to be ſometimes uſed, after the Example of the holy Apoſtles. This may be further enquired into in one of the Sections of this Treatiſe.

9. We fall into Detractions by Reproaches and publick Invectives againſt Perſons. I call them publick when they are uſed in preſence of many Perſons, and eſpecially of thoſe that are not concerned in the ſubject of the Diſpute. This way of Detraction is terrible: We name Perſons and Things: We ſpare nothing: We ſhew no Favour: The moſt filthy Terms, the moſt offenſive Words are made uſe of: The moſt ſecret Actions are laid open: The oldeſt Crimes are anew raked up. Then Probabilities and raſh Judgments paſs for Truths and Realities.

Some will perhaps ſay, That I aggravate every where, and ſo am not to be credited, ſeeing I have in another Place ſaid, That private Ways are alſo extreme dangerous.

But this Reaſoning, inſtead of making againſt me, makes directly againſt Detraction, to which I am very oppoſite. And from what I have ſaid, we may conclude, that both theſe ways are truly very dangerous, very terrible, and conſequently to be avoided. It is not ſufficient not to practice ſome of theſe ways; we muſt abandon them all. 10.

10. *Curſing* is detracting. To detract and to curſe may be expreſs'd in Latin by the ſame Word; and in French there is a conſiderable likeneſs between the ſignification of theſe two Terms, as well as between the Terms themſelves. When *Shimei* curſed *David*, by calling him a *bloody Man*, did he not ſpeak ill of that Prince? Does not a part of Curſes conſiſt in wiſhing, that the Evil, which theſe we complain of, have done to us or others, may fall upon them; that ſo they may be puniſhed therewith? Do we Curſe thoſe whom we believe honeſt and virtuous? The ſame may be ſaid of Imprecations. SECT. II. 2 Sam. 16. 5, 7.

11. We detract by raiſing evil Suſpicions of the Manners of any one, after what way ſoever it be. For Example, with reference to thoſe whom a Man converſes with; as in ſaying, he is very familiar with Mr. N----- who is exceedingly debauched. This makes a great Impreſſion, inaſmuch as we are not ignorant, that evil Company may corrupt, and that corrupt Perſons ſeek ſuch Company. And this ſort of detraction at the ſame time gives an evil ſuſpicion of the one, and ſlily ſpeaks againſt the other.

12. By alluding to ſomething trifling, inſipid or wicked, which any one has ſaid, whereof we make a kind of Proverb, which by theſe means ſoon gets along into the World,

SECT. II. World, where we may obſerve many of this Nature.

13. By any way mimicking the defects of another whatever they be, as his Grimaces, Hypocriſy, &c.

14. Many Times an *Irony* is made uſe of to detract, and to expreſs our detractions. This *Irony* conſiſts in ſaying Truths by contraries. Thus we call a Man knaviſh, by ſaying, that he is the moſt honeſt Man alive. So we call a Man talkative, by ſaying, that he hardly ever ſpeaks.

15. We may detract by Geſtures and Poſtures. For Inſtance a Wink of the Eye, (which in a Man is almoſt as expreſſive as Words,) on a Perſon, ſhall ſhew whom we are talking of under a borrow'd Name. The Hands may ſerve for the ſame Ends; and hence it is, that the Ancients juſtly gave them the Epithet of talkative: Whether they ſpeak alone, or whether they accompany what the Mouth utters. A Shrug of the Shoulders may ſhow, that we are aſhamed of what a Perſon ſays, that we pity him and deſpiſe him. It follows then that a dumb Man may detract by his Geſtures, as well as another by his Tongue.

Writing, Painting and Signs in general whether natural or artificial, may alſo ſerve to diſcover the Sins and Vices of our Neighbours.

ARTICLE

ARTICLE *IV.*

Some other Ways of detracting.

MOreover there are ſome ways of detraction, which are not ſo eaſily perceived as thoſe we have already related, which notwithſtanding are fatal Scandals and forbidden Turns.

Of theſe we ſhall ſay ſomething,

1. It very often happens, that Compariſons in certain Circumſtances, are kind of Detraction. Suppoſe two Perſons exactly alike; If we ſay, the one is more Religious than the other, hereby we accuſe the latter of Irreligion, or at leaſt of not having made that progreſs in Piety, that he might and ought to have made. Let us ſuppoſe two others, one whereof is become a devout and good Chriſtian, with very little help, the other with conſiderable aſſiſtance comes far ſhort of him; while we commend the former, and exalt him above his Fellow; do we not tacitly accuſe the latter of having made an ill uſe of GOD's Grace? *Saul* knew this very well, *when he ſhow'd his diſlike to the Daughters of* Iſrael, *who in their Songs had given* David *the glory of having ſlain Ten Thouſand Philiſtines, while to him they allow'd the honour of defeating but Thouſands of thoſe very Enemies.* 1 Sam. 18. 7, 8.

2. When

Sect. II. 2. When we favour Detractors, and ſtir them up to back-bite, then we may be accounted partakers in Detraction. This may be done ſeveral ways, as (1) We encourage Detractors by an affected Silence, whence they fancy, that we acquieſce in all they ſay againſt the honour of others, and take our ſilence for Conſent. Who does not ſee that this is to be a Favourer of this Sin, and conſequently a Detractor: That cauſed *S. Ambroſe* to ſay, *that Death enters at the Windows of the Ear, when you acquieſce in and give your Conſent to him that ſpeaks.* (2) We encourage Perſons to detract, when we admire the Wit of thoſe, who have ſhewn an uncommon Craftineſs in certain Sallies againſt their Neighbours; or when we applaud any one, that has wittily ſlander'd in our Preſence: a thing too common in this impious and fawning Age! (3) We detract, when we give way to Detraction by any Storys of this Nature, which afford an Opportunity to others to finiſh what was but begun, and to go on, after they are put in the way. In fine, we furniſh Occaſions for Detraction, for which we are accountable, if we fix the Converſation upon Perſons, of whom we know that ſome in the Company can't hear us talk without detracting from them, on account of ſome real or imaginary Cauſe of diſſatisfaction againſt

againſt them. All theſe ways of making others detract, and encouraging them therein, are ſo many Sins. *S. Paul* is expreſs on this Point in his Epiſtle to the *Romans*. He looks upon it not only as a Crime but even as a double Crime, to favour it, when he ſays of the Heathen, *that not content to commit thoſe Sins, for which Nature might reprove them, they had Pleaſure in thoſe who did the ſame.* Indeed, this is to take Vice under our Protection; this ſhews, that ſince we don't condemn it in others, we our ſelves are ready to commit it every time an Occaſion ſhall preſent, and that we do not ſin by Surprize, but with a Deſire which we have had a long Time before thus to applaud Sinners. Which undoubtedly aggravates the Fault. SECT. II. Rom. 1. 32.

3. We do in ſome meaſure detract when we diminiſh the fine Qualities of any one, at what time another is ſpeaking advantageouſly thereof. When, inſtead of aſſiſting to ſhew them in all their Luſtre, and to give glorious Actions all their due Praiſe, thereby to induce others to the like Practice, we endeavour to tarniſh and obſcure them, by all ways and methods. Such a Man ſay we, did good becauſe he was in no way to do evil, or elſe he had his own Intereſt in view. It was his Paſſion that guided him, and Love of vain-glory that engaged him therein, or elſe he did it without

Sect. II. out any design of doing good. The good which he has done, say we, is very imperfect; he might have done much more and much better, thus high to value his Actions, is doing him too much Honour.

Still further to lessen the Praise of a good Action, we endeavour to diminish the certainty thereof. The thing, say we is not so certain, but that it wants Confirmation; perhaps they who publish it, were not rightly inform'd; it is rather too soon to give credit to such News. Happy turn when Charitably used!

4. We do something like Detraction, when we will not speak of any ones Vertues upon Occasions that naturally present and when it wou'd be just so to do. It is not enough, that we refrain from hurting; we must also do good, thereby imitating our great Pattern the Lord Jesus Christ, who promised the Woman that poured the Box of precious Ointment on him, *that wherever his Gospel should be Preached, to her honour should be mentioned what she had done unto him.* Doubtless a Prince would look upon it as a great Injury shou'd we rob him of any of his Titles, or bestow them on others. The thing is the very same as to particular Persons.

Matth. 26. 13.

5. To be rejoiced at hearing Detraction, to wish that any one would detract, to be very easy when it so falls out, is a Sin against

gainſt the Love we owe the Perſon detracting and detracted. Hereby we participate in the Back-bitings of the former: And altho' this diſpoſition of Heart while it remains encloſed therein, does no Damage to others; it does very conſiderable hurt to thoſe in whom it abides; ſince we may ſin in our Tho'ts as well as in our Words and Actions. It is Criminal before GOD even to Will, what is unjuſt before Men. SECT. II.

There are perhaps many other ways of ſowing and ſpreading abroad Detractions, for who can reckon them all up? But however it be, I am perſwaded, they may be eaſily ranked under ſome one of the foregoing Articles and Heads.

The deſign of this whole Treatiſe is to overthrow Vice, and to eſtabliſh Virtue; this in particular was our Intent in this Section, and we cannot better conclude it, than by Uſes drawn from what has been ſaid, and profitable to Edification.

The Uſes *of this Section.*

SHou'd we undertake to ſhew all the Uſes that might be drawn therefrom, they wou'd be as long as the Section it ſelf. We ſhall here therefore only juſt mention the principal Heads, and finiſh with motives and exhortations to avoid the Vice we have been deſcribing in its principal Parts.

We

Sect. II. We have ſaid, That there are almoſt infinite Ways of Detraction; becauſe that on the one hand, we make uſe herefor of Turns differing for the moſt part one from the other; and on the other hand, That the Faults of Men are alſo different. In regard of the firſt, We ought often to examine our ſelves, in order to diſcover the Means which we ordinarily make uſe of for this End; or rather, the diverſity of theſe Means, which two things are very difficult: Since that if theſe ways are generally the ſame, Habit & Cuſtom, which might make us know them better, hinder our ſeeing them; even as we cannot well diſcern Objects which are too near our Sight, or as we do but little examine into the Motion of the Tongue in ſpeaking, becauſe theſe Actions are very frequent & common with us, we ſeldom or ever think on them. Again, If theſe ways are different, certainly the Trouble of examining them one after another will be very great: Wherefore I ſay, This muſt be done often, and with a great deal of Care and Exactneſs, ſo as that we may know them and abſtain from them.

As to what regards the Variety and Number of Faults which we tax, we may from thence infer, That every Man is a Sinner, that the World in general is very wicked, and that therefore we ought to be on our guard, that we be not corrupted by evil

evil Examples; that we are to mourn for the Vices of another, without detracting from him. We ſhould pardon all Faults in others, but none in our ſelves. *We ſhould cauſe the light of our good Works to ſhine forth in the midſt of a crooked and perverſe Generation.* By this Light we ſhall behold the Crimes of others, without baſely reflecting on the Criminals: As the Light of the Sun diſcovers to us the Stains and Spots of a Garment without conſuming it. Zeal and Love are like *the Fires which deſcended on the Apoſtles without ſcorching them.* SECT. II. Mat. 5. 16. Acts 2. 3.

Since witty Methods of Detraction are moſt dangerous both to us and our Neighbours, let us uſe our utmoſt Endeavours to deliver our ſelves from them. The more ſlippery the Way is, the more cautious ought we to be leaſt we fall; and the more dangerous the Fall is, the more careful we ſhould be to avoid it. We wou'd let the World ſee we have Wit; and to ſhew it, we lay aſide all Bowels of Pity. We wou'd have it known, that we are Owners of a Talent; and by it and for it, we deſtroy our ſelves. We wou'd pleaſe thoſe that liſten to us, and thereby draw them with our ſelves into a moſt dreadful Abyſs. What a Folly! What a Contradiction!

Do you your ſelves reflect on the different ways of back-biting, juſt now.

SECT. II. mentioned: You will without doubt have Time and Occasion enough, if every Time that you hear Detraction, or are tempted thereto your selves, you wou'd give a little Attention. Consider that the Ways made use of by Detractors are as criminal as Detraction it self: Think how mean, rascally, and unworthy of a Gentleman and a Christian they are.

We have endeavour'd to discover, as far as was tho't necessary, the Ways of Detraction, (1) With reference to it's Subject and Matter. (2) With respect to the Circumstances by which the Faults & Sins of Men are spread abroad. (3.) With regard to the Means and Instruments employ'd for this End: But to bring the whole to a narrow Compass, we advise you, not so much to mind the Failings of Men, which were consider'd under the first Article, as their good and commendable Qualities.

This Advice being followed, we shall have no need to warn you against the Means of speaking ill, which were mentioned in the two following Articles. When this Fire has no more Matter to feed upon, there will be no necessity of contriving Means to quench it. And truly, what can be more wise, what more reasonable, than to contemplate Virtue, rather than Vice? Is it not much more lovely,

much

much more noble, much more agreable to look upon fine Flowers, exhaling a ſweet and charming ſmell, than upon a nauſeous and loathſome Sink? In a word, is it not vaſtly better to contemplate the Work of GOD in good Deeds, than that of the Devil in bad ones? SECT. II.

After having ſet forth Detraction in the Ways wherein it is practiſed (happy if we at the ſame Time can be made to abhor it!) We proceed to ſhew the Nature thereof by it's Sources and Cauſes. This ſhall be the Subject of the following Section.

SECT. III.

Of the Sources *of Detraction.*

SECT. III.

THERE is hardly any better Way of finding out the Perfection or Imperfection of a Thing, than by conſidering it in it's Cauſes and Sources; the Cauſe & Effect having much of reſemblance between them. Thus according to our knowledge of Good and Evil in it's Cauſes, in a Subject, we ſhall love or hate it in proportion: And to ſpeak more particularly of Detraction, the more Poiſon we ſhall remark in the Head-Springs

SECT. III thereof, the more carefully ſhould we avoid drinking of the Water at the Fountains, which by their Multitude form a dangerous Lake and a deep Gulf. Moreover as this Heap of Waters may have two ſorts of Sources, the one internal, even in the Bottom of the Lake it ſelf; the other external and accidental; in like manner we find external and internal Sources of Detraction, which we ſhall treat of in this Section, beginning with the firſt.

ARTICLE *I.*

Of the external *Sources of Detraction.*

WE call thoſe external Sources, which are not properly in the Heart and Mind, or which produce Detraction only by Accident.

Firſt Source, *Proſperity.*

One ſaid very well, That Religion has three ſorts of Enemies, Hereticks, Perſecutors and Pleaſures, and that the laſt are the moſt dangerous. In reality, theſe Pleaſures have produced Hereticks themſelves; never did they appear in ſo great Number, as after that *Conſtantine* had procured

cured the Peace of the Church, and fill'd it with Gifts and Riches. Theſe very Pleaſures, or this ſame Proſperity, have very often rais'd up Perſecutors: Witneſs all thoſe Princes, who have extended their Perſecutions according as they enlarged the Bounds of their Kingdoms. And to apply this to my Subject; never was leſs Detraction ſeen in the Church, than when it was moſt cruelly haraſs'd and torn to pieces; becauſe that in general, Afflictions & Adverſity ſute Piety much better than Proſperity, and particularly in Perſecution, we have other Affairs than thoſe of Detraction. 'Tis then we return to GOD, and with earneſt Prayers beg of him, that his Worſhip may be again eſtabliſhed: 'Tis then we endeavour to appeaſe him by a newneſs of Life: 'Tis then, when Danger is common to all the Members of the Church, a Man wiſhes the Happineſs of all thro' Love as well as Intereſt, ſince no good can happen to them, but he muſt alſo be a partaker therein. In a word, no one is for perſecuting others, by backbitings, when he himſelf is under Perſecution, unleſs it be, that he is willing his own Perſecutors ſhould ſuffer by it. SECT. III

But now Proſperity makes a Man look on others with Haughtineſs and Contempt. (And what we have ſaid of Proſperity in a general way, may be applied to every

Sect. III particular Person who is in that Estate.) A Man oftentimes thinks himself the better when he is Richer than others, and equally insults their miseries and failings. He will very often enlarge the one and publish the other. Pleasures ordinarily give birth to Faint-heartedness and Indifference for GOD's Glory and our Neighbour's Welfare. Thus Men thro' the Corruption of their Hearts, usually abuse the good things of their Creator. Thus those who under Persecution wou'd not backbite their very Persecutors, have in another State, spoken Evil of their Neighbours, their Relations and their Benefactors.

Second Source, *Frequent Examples.*

We have already noted, that the Sin we are writing against, is very common in the World. In this Section we shall shew the Reason why it is so. It is so, because this Sin goes unpunished, and because we are engaged therein by many Passions and other things. This being laid down, we must also suppose another Truth, namely, that we have a great propensity to follow Custom, and imitate what we see practiced. Hence it comes to pass, that many times, Examples engage us to do things for which at first we had much Indifference and even an Aversion. How then shou'd we be able

ble to avoid imitating a Vice, to which we have so much Inclination as that of Detraction, and which suits so well with our natural, that is, corrupt Disposition; What adds still more force to these Examples is, that they come from those who are accounted Gentlemen, and who truly wou'd be ashamed to do an Injury to a Neighbour in any other of his Goods, besides that of his Honour: Men, who are led on to detract, only because they don't really reflect on the Evil that accrues thereby to the Person detracted.

A Third Source, *Impunity.*

There is certainly nothing more capable of encouraging a Crime, as Men are now disposed, than Impunity. Perhaps there are some who think that Detraction does but little hurt to Society, because the Overseers and Managers thereof do permit it. However it be, this is certain, that when Men have no outward Bridle to curb them in, they give up themselves with Frenzy to their Vices. When publick Persons do not punish them, nor private Persons shame them, they are no longer kept within the Bounds of Duty, by these Considerations, which might where they have there due Weight, hinder them from falling into Vices and Excesses. There is

Sect. III no need of proving, that Detraction is not punished by Magiſtrates; This is notoriouſly evident, and if you except that Detraction which ſtrikes at Sovereigns, we can't (I believe,) find an Example to the contrary in this Age.

A Fourth Source, *The Eaſineſs of Detraction.*

One Source of this Sin is, that it coſts neither Money nor Trouble to commit it; Whereas a Man can't ordinarily *get drunk* without laying out his Caſh. In like manner the coveteous Perſon can't hoard up his numerous Treaſures without Sweat and Fatigue. On the contrary, it is eaſy to detract in repoſe, and free from the Toils and Vexations of the other. Thus a coveteous Man may well be a Detractor, tho' we ſeldom ſee him a Drunkard or a Whore-Maſter. What renders this Sin ſtill more common is, that it may agree, at leaſt in ſome manner, with all other Vices, whereas there are many others which are incompatible, as we have already ſhewn.

A Fifth Source, *The frequent Occaſions that we have for Detraction.*

There are an infinity of theſe Occaſions, as well with regard to the great Number of

of Faults observable in our Neighbours, as with respect to the Easiness of practicing this Vice; and also with reference to the vast Number of Persons, who are ever ready to listen to and commend defamers. Having in another Part of this Treatise, already spoken of these Occasions, we shall not any longer stop here. SECT. III

We do not here speak of the Sources of Corruption in general; because that, altho' those of Detraction make a considerable part of this Corruption which reigns to this Day among Christians, yet this wou'd carry us too far from our Subject; besides, that they have been very well handled in the last Age.

ARTICLE II.

Of the internal *Sources of Detraction.*

WE call those internal Sources which are found in the very Person of the Detractor, whereas those we have spoken of in the preceeding Article refer to some external Circumstances.

The First Source, *Original Sin.*

There is no principle more deeply rooted in the Heart of Man, than this Sin, since it was enfolded therein even before his Birth.

SECT. III Birth. *Behold*, says *David* on this Subject, *I was shapen in Iniquity, and in Sin did my Mother conceive me.* Psal. 51. 7. After the fall of our first Parents, the Earth became covered with Thorns and Thistles and venemous Reptiles, and fill'd with evil Roots which remain until this Day, notwithstanding the Deluge, which one wou'd have tho't, shou'd thoroughly cleanse it. In the like manner, the Heart of *Adam* was full of the defilement of Sin, which he has transmitted to his Posterity. Righteous *Noah*, the second Father of Mankind, was not exempt therefrom, nor wash'd clean by the Baptism of overflowing Waters. He left to his Children what he had himself received from *Adam*.

Some pretend, that our Inclination to Evil arises only from the Examples that are daily set before us. I confess, as has been already shewn, that Examples greatly contribute thereto, but I deny that Examples do all intirely; or else let any one tell me, what Example of Murder had *Cain* before his Eyes, when he slew his Brother *Abel*. Gen. 4. 8. True indeed, he had seen the Disobedience of his Parents; but it was also from this very Disobedience to the divine Laws, from this very Sin of the first Inhabitants of the World, that the Source of all our Vices arises.

Having

Having thus shewn the general principle of Sins, of whose Number Detraction is one, let us see more particularly how this arises from that fatal and communicative Fountain. SECT. III

Here is the Reason thereof. If *Adam* had not sinn'd, all his Posterity had been faultless and consequently none could have detracted, and being all exempt from Sin, we should have been so far from detracting, that we shou'd have had an ardent Love for one another.

But instead of this, some would think, that the Tongue of the Serpent which did so much evil to our first Parents has passed from the Tempter into the Tempted, and their Off-spring. These Men endeavour to do as much Mischief to each other by their Tongue, as Satan did then by his. They don't feel themselves sufficiently wounded it seems, and wou'd perfect the Wounds, and make them still deeper. From what we have said, it appears, that this first Sin, which ought to be lookt upon, or at least understood and supposed as one of the Causes of all Vices, should more particularly be accounted a Source of that Vice we are arguing against

The Second Source, *Idleness*.

The Mind which often times avoids Labour, will nevertheless be busied about something

SECT. III something. Wherefore if it finds nothing in it's own proper Fund for Amusement, it will meddle with other Men's Affairs, and make them it's own. Wise and happy indeed, if it intermeddled only to pleasure them! But this it does not. As Idleness is an evil Source, it can produce only evil Effects. Thus many will pry into their Neighbours Life, only to pick Faults, and then expose them to the World. Now to prove, that Idleness produces Detraction, we shall bring the Testimony of *S. Paul*, and our daily Experience. The Apostle speaking of certain Widows of his time,

1 Tim. 5. 13 says, *And withal they learn to be idle, wandering from House to House; and not only idle, but Tatlers also, and Busiebodies, speaking things which they ought not.* And does not Experience teach us, that these things arise from abusive Discourse?

Perhaps some who resemble these Widows wou'd justify themselves by the Purity of their Intentions, which are not to hurt their Neighbours in the least, but only for Pastime and Diversion.

I answer, That it is the same thing, let the Intentions of a Back-biter be what they will, since a Man's Reputation is after the same manner wounded And again, Time is a thing too dear, too precious and too irreparable, to be spent in unprofitableness, much less evil things. Let us rather hear

the

the Apoſtle's Exhortation, *Redeem the Time, becauſe the Days are Evil*; *Evil* inaſmuch as they are ſpent in Sin; *Evil*, becauſe they will one Day prove fatal to thoſe who have ſpent them ſo ill; at leaſt if they do not repent in the time allow'd them therefor. Let us not then add the Sin of Detraction to all other Sins we commit. Still further, the Reputation of our Brethren is too touching, too affecting to be raviſhed from them, only that we may be the pleaſured and diverted at their Coſt. SECT. III Eph. 5. 16

A Third Source, *Impudence.*

To be convinc'd of this, we need only conſider how neceſſary Impudence is in order to detract with ſo much Tranſport as many do: And moreover it is certain, that Baſhfulneſs, which is oppoſed to Impudence, ſhuts the Mouth in making the Mind ſubmiſſive. In ſuch a ſtate as this, a Man wou'd be ſo far from hurting his Neighbour by Detraction, that he wou'd not dare to be ſeen in it. It is often the tho't of his own Failings that produces this baſhfulneſs. Certain it is, that Modeſty is ſo commendable, ſo excellent and ſo contrary to Impudence, that it is a conſtant Bar to back-biting. Theſe latter therefore poſſeſs two great Virtues, Modeſty and Charity, while the former have two great Faults, Impudence and Detraction.

A

SECT. III A Fourth Source, *The Itch of Talking.*

There are thoſe, whoſe Genius is ſuch, that they will talk at any rate, of any Thing, and after any manner. *Solomon* ſpeaking of theſe Perſons, ſays, *that in the multitude of words there wants not Sin.* *Paul ſpeaks of Itching Ears*; We may ſay alſo, that there are *Itching Tongues.* If we do but know the Practice of the World, we cannot be ignorant, that Detraction makes the greateſt Part of their Diſcourſe, and ſo is the Sin which they oftenеſt commit.

Prov. 10. 14

2 Tim 4 3.

As Men have not in themſelves a Fund ſufficient for continual Converſation, or rather motion of the Tongue, ſo that ſometimes they muſt be ſilent, they greedily lay hold on all occaſions which the Faults of others furniſh them withal. They are afraid, it ſeems, of being prevented by other Detractors, and haſten to hinder them with as much eagerneſs as a Courtier, who is going to carry his Prince the news of his Enemies overthrow.

'Tis true, theſe Men very commonly ſpeak without any deſign of offending or hurting any Perſon, and there is more Imprudence than Malice diſcover'd in their Proceeding, but nevertheleſs it is not without Faults. Are not theſe two very conſiderable Faults, not to know how to be ſilent, nor to ſpeak well? A

A Fifth Source, *Drunkenneſs.* SECT. III

From hard drinking comes Drunkenneſs, and from this Detraction. *There is Truth in Wine*, we ſay, and this makes Perſons eloquent in back-biting. The Words of *Seneca* may ſerve for a Proof of this. *As new Wine burſts the Cask, and the Heat cauſes it to aſcend, ſo the Strength of Wine is ſuch, that it reveals and diſcovers the greateſt Secret.* So that altho' we be not inclined to Detraction, yet Wine ſhall raiſe it in us. But we have an Authority incomparably beyond that of the *Philoſopher*, even *David*, who ſays, *They did tear me and ceaſed not, with hypocritical Mockers in Feaſts: they gnaſhed upon me with their Teeth.* It is equally true, to ſay, that Railers are Lovers of their Belly, and Lovers of their Belly are Railers. This the ſame Prophet confirms elſewhere, when he complains, *That he was the Song of the Drunkards.* This is a Truth, which Experience clearly ſhews and it was on this Experience, that the *Prophet* and the *Philoſopher* founded their Words. There are too many perhaps who knew experimentally, how fatal and terrible are thoſe Evils, which Tippling and Drunkenneſs produce; ſuch are Sickneſs, Brutiſhneſs, Poverty, Quarrels, *&c.* but perhaps they have not yet ſufficiently remarked,

Epiſt. 83.

Pſal. 5. 15, 16.

Pſal. 69. 12.

Sect. III marked, how dangerous this Vice is to our Neighbours, and to thoſe who are not Drunkards. This is what I would have obſerved.

A Sixth Source, *Soft and effeminate Complaiſance*

From this it ariſes, That we ſubſcribe to all that Detractors ſay; that we favour them; that we confirm them; that we take up their Words; that we enhance them ſtill more; that we call Good, Evil, and Evil, Good, altho' we have no Intereſt in ſo doing, but are only guided by the Pleaſure of paſſing for complaiſant, becauſe we know thoſe of a contrary Diſpoſition are always blamed. One of the Reaſons why we ſee more Detractors among great Men, than elſewhere, ariſes from this fatal and barbarous Complaiſance, which is ſo much encouraged among them. There is no one but what eaſily ſees, how mean, ſhameful, and wicked it is, thus to make our Reaſon and Conſcience buckle to the vicious and corrupt Opinions of others, and ſo to make our ſelves Slaves to the Humours of other Perſons.

A Seventh Source, *A contradictory Spirit.*

On the other Hand, We ſee Perſons of a quite contrary Humour. Their Temper is ſo contradictory, that it is ſufficient Reaſon

Reaſon for them to cry a Man down only becauſe another commends him. This they do only to contradict and gainſay the Sentiments & Praiſes of others: Which ought to be as much condemned as it is blameworthy. Happy thoſe who can keep a Medium between theſe two Vices! SECT. III

An Eighth Source, *Levity and Gaiety.*

Ask many who detract why they do ſo, and 'tis with much difficulty they can tell why, ſince they hardly know the reaſon themſelves. Theſe are Perſons *driven with every Wind*, never fix'd, many Times ignorant of what they love or what they hate. They ſpeak good or evil of others, without knowing any reaſon of this difference, and are ſure to blame to-morrow, what they extoll'd to the very Clouds this day. In a word, Their whole Life is but a train of Inconſiderations and Inadvertences; from whence it comes, that they back-bite without any other reaſon, than that of an Occaſion's preſenting. The bare Deſcription of Men of this Character ſufficiently ſhews how ridiculous and unreaſonable they are.

A Ninth Source, *Raſh Judgments.*

Under theſe raſh and evil Judgments, I comprehend Prejudices and Suſpicions in-

Sect. III

jurious to our Neighbours. We shall readily see, That these are a Source of Detraction, when we reflect and consider that the publick Judgments we pass against any one, have been preceeded by particular Judgments of his Conduct in our own Mind. The Action of the Soul precedes that of the Tongue, which is but an Organ. Again, These Judgments being formed on a want of Charity, they are produced by this same Default. Moreover, these Judgments are a pure Detraction when deliver'd before witness. "We reckon that "a Man don't fully act the *Historian* when "he barely relates Things as they were "transacted; therefore we account it his "Duty to give his own Remarks and "Judgment upon them, says a modern Author.

A Tenth Source, *Curiosity.*

They who have this Fault, get an exact Information of every ones Behaviour, and if it so happen, that they can't learn from one Person all that they wou'd Know, they go immediately to another and tell him all they have before heard, hereby to learn more, and be instructed in what they cou'd not know by means of the first. But these Persons don't differ much from

from those *St. Paul* speaks of in his second Epistle to *Timothy*, *who are ever learning, but never able to come to the knowledge of the Truth:* I mean, to the Truth of the Gospel, which condemns this Curiosity, (as we shall shew hereafter,) what encreases this Sin is, that it provokes those to detra , whom we inform of our Neighbours ill Conduct. SECT. III. 2 Tim. 3. 7

Even in this World, these Persons are look'd upon with Contempt, and oftentimes receive affronts. Nay, They themselves confess their Curiosity to be unbecoming, when they say, (as they often do) If I an't too inquisitive, I should be glad if you wou'd tell me how this Affair was carried on.

An Eleventh Source, *Contempt.*

The Contempt we shew Persons is also another Source of Detraction and Way whereby we back-bite. For why do we speak contemptuously of our Neighbours, unless it be to lessen their Credit with those that hear us? Why should we talk in a degrading way of them, unless on account of their Failings, which render them contemptible to us, and which we thereby discover?

I say further, That when we back-bite any Persons, it is plain that we are very

SECT. III willing to make them as contemptible to others, as they are to our selves. This is what infallibly follows on Detraction.

I add, That we don't detract from those we have a Respect for; it must then follow, that Disrespect produces Detraction. Prov. 14. 21. *Solomon* ranks Disrespect among Sins, when he says, *He that despiseth his Neighbour sinneth.* Moreover, it is a very vile, ridiculous and mean way, to fall upon those whom we insinuate to be so mean as not to deserve to be taken notice of.

A Twelfth Source, *The Corruption and Inhumanity of Detractors.*

JESUS CHRIST attributes the want of Love, under which is included Detraction, to the Corruption of Men, *Because*, says he, *Iniquity shall abound, the Love of many shall wax cold.* Matth. 24. 12. This is apparently what *Solomon* means, when he says, *An ungodly Man diggeth up Evil; and in his Lips there is a burning Fire.* Prov. 16. 27. What evinces this is, That there is no wicked Man, who examines, pryes into, and searches after the Knowledge of other Men's Failings more than Detractors do; it is from this very search that Detraction becomes so very common. And this hath been very justly compared to Fire by the Apostle *James.* James 3. 5.

In

In a word, if a good Man from the good Treasure of his Heart brings forth good Things, and an evil Man, evil Things, what must he be, who from his Heart brings forth Things so very pernicious as Detractions? What else can he be called than an evil Person, yea, that evil Person, whom *Solomon* speaks of? Let us be a little more particular, a wicked Man is hasty, revengefull, &c. Qualities very proper to produce Detraction. Again, Accused by his own Conscience, he thinks all the World accuses him, and accordingly is always ready to speak evil of those, whom he fancies wou'd treat him so, if Occasion presented. Besides, there are those who detract, endeavouring thereby to excuse their own Faults, and to cast their Sins on the Multitude of those who are subject to the same Vices. Thus you may see voluptuous and coveteous Persons, who to palliate their own base and shameful Actions, do with Pleasure tell of those who resemble them therein; and strive to aggravate the Sins of others, that so they may lessen their own. Again, you will meet some Persons who to free themselves from the blame due to their excesses, accuse others of Faults, not the same with their own, but which may serve as a covering for them. In a word, there is in the most of Detractors, a cruel and savage humour, such as that of the Lion

SECT. III
Matt. 12. 35

Sect. III among Beasts, which urges them on to Detraction. You may find such as I am speaking of, who without Reason or Interest, take a peculiar delight in every Thing that may hurt others, whose grief is their joy, and who doubly rejoice, when they are by their Detractions, the Instruments thereof. I mean those merciless Wretches, who never knew Christian Love: who never commend but with Reluctance, and in such an awkard Way, that it seems they give their consent thereto, as tho' it were a great Favour done to the Person spoken of. But altho' it were a Favour, the malicious Air with which you Consent, wou'd greatly diminish it's Worth.

A Thirteenth Source, *Ingratitude.*

Some Persons speak ill of Benefactors, that they may extenuate the Obligations they are under to them, by shewing, that the defects apparent therein, make them unworthy of any acknowledgement. Thus they shew themselves ungrateful by endeavouring to prove, that they might be so. An unthankful Man is like a Rose-bush, which pricks both him that plants it and him that gathers the Rose.

A Fourteenth Source, *Interest and Coveteousness.*

1 T m. 6 10 *Coveteousness*, according to *St. Paul's* expression, *is the Root of all Evil*; con-

proved.

ſequently of Detraction, as may be thus proved. A coveteous Man to conform to the great Ones, from whom he expects Wages & Penſions, and to pleaſe them, detracts from all thoſe they are diſpleaſed with.

Another will decry the Conduct of a Perſon raiſed to a gainful Poſt, thereby inſinuating, that the Man does not deſerve it, but that he himſelf merits it much better.

There is nothing more common than to hear Perſons of the ſame Profeſſion backbite each other. They will ſay all the ill poſſible of thoſe who exerciſe the ſame Calling with themſelves. To bring or keep Cuſtomers to themſelves, and ſo hinder them from going to others, they will repreſent them as knaviſh & cheating. Who does not ſee that it is not the Love they have for Cuſtomers, which makes them talk after this manner but only a Deſire of Gain?

Wou'd you know why many Folks will talk ſo diſadvantageouſly of a Poor Man's Conduct; it is, that they may not be blamed for not helping him by their Charity, as tho' he did not deſerve it. By this they pretend to juſtify their hard-heartedneſs. And tho' we ought not to give without Diſtinction, the Faults of the Poor are rather the pretence, than the Reaſon which hinders us from doing them good.

SECT. III

Do we not see, That after having spoken ill of a Man contrary to our Interest, we again praise him, if he takes to our side? An evident Sign that we talk according to our own Interests. In a Word, We may make an interested Man say any thing against the Reputation of his Neighbours, who loves nothing of them or in them but their Money, so blinded is he with a Desire of heaping it up. I believe then that when the Holy Scripture so frequently threatens covetous Persons with Hell, it is partly because Avarice breeds Detraction: And that Detraction is so frequently condemned by the Word of GOD, because it has Avarice for it's Principle and End.

A Fourteenth Source, *Hypocrisy.*

Detractors wou'd make those, before whom they detract, believe, That they themselves are very far from the Vices they blame in others, it being unnatural to speak ill of those whom we resemble; altho' oftentimes they have the very same Faults. Is not this pure Hypocrisy? Still further, The Words they make use of for Detraction sufficiently shew on various occasions, that Hypocrisy is the Source thereof. *An Hypocrite with his Tongue destroys his Neighbour*, says *Solomon. His*

Prov. 10. 10.

Words

Words were ſofter than Oil, yet were they drawn Swords, ſaid his Father before him. Detraction is an Hypocriſy which conſiſts in ſpeaking well; (for what is there better than to ſay the Truth?) and it conſiſts alſo in doing ill; (for what is there worſe than to deſtroy the Reputation of our Brethren?) SECT. III Pſa. 50. 19.

Hypocriſy leads to Hell by the way to Heaven. 'How am I troubled, ſays one, 'for the Love I bear Mr. N—— that he 'ſhould commit ſo baſe an Action as that 'I ſhall acquaint you with!" Are you troubled, O perfidious Man, and yet will you encreaſe his Shame by publiſhing it! Perſons of this Character wou'd ſeem willing to hide the Thing, but they ſoon ſuffer themſelves to be overcome by Queſtions and Entreaties. They wou'd apparently excuſe thoſe they ſpeak ill of; but truly the ſureſt way of excuſing is, not to accuſe them.

What ſtill further proves the Hypocriſy of theſe Men is, That no ſooner ſhall they meet a Perſon abroad, whom they have been juſt before back-biting, but they will make him a thouſand Offers of Service, and redoubled Proteſtations of a tender and ſincere Friendſhip. If this be not after having detracted, it will be perhaps before: Like thoſe Pagans, who adorn'd the Victims ready for Sacrifice, with Garlands of Flowers,

or

SECT. III or the Jews, who after having resolved the Death of our Saviour, as of an infa-
John 19.2. mous Person, cloathed him with a Purple Robe, the Mark of Royalty.

As the Words & Actions of Hypocrites are very base so they are very dangerous, because it looks by these affected Discourses, as tho' it were only the Power of Truth which made them talk thus, and consequently they produce a very terrible Effect on the Hearer's Mind, to the prejudice of our Neighbour's Reputation. In a Word, The Devil is never more to be feared than when *he transforms himself*
2 Cor. 11. 14. *into an Angel of Light.* GOD condemns and forbids Hypocrisy in so many places of his Word, that it wou'd be tedious to mention them all. You may see hereupon, *Job* 15.34. *Psalm* 32.2. *Matth.*6.2. *Mark* 7. 6. &c. From which places it appears, that when we wou'd abuse others, we hurt our selves.

A Sixteenth Source, *A false and blind Zeal.*

A blind and false Zeal for Religion and our own Party often causes Detraction. We think to do GOD Service by hurting the Reputation of those whom we suppose to act contrary to his Glory. And a Man of this Character speaks ill of those of a Religion which he has quitted, in order

der to perſwade them of a Communion he is about to embrace; that he has as much Deteſtation for his firſt Engagements as Affection for his laſt. SECT. III

I call this Zeal falſe and blind, becauſe it is directly contrary to the Spirit of Chriſtianity, which breaths nothing but Meekneſs and Sweetneſs. We may ſay ſo to thoſe who are poſſeſſed herewith, as our Lord to his Diſciples, when they wou'd have had him conſum'd the Inhabitants who denied them Entry into their City, *ye know not of what Spirit ye are.* Luk. 55. 9.

A true Zeal for GOD's Houſe enflames and eats up our Hearts; but that is a blind Zeal, which eats up the Reputation of other Men by heaping Injuries on them. The Maxims of thoſe who have eſpouſed any Party either in State Affairs or others are far from being Chriſtian. We do, as it were, lift thoſe of our own Party to the Stars, that ſo we may ſink thoſe of the oppoſite ſide to Hell. But does it not many times happen, that the divided Parties unite, and ſo we become the Prey of thoſe whom we have offended? Joh. 2. 17.

From the Zeal and Paſſion we have for a Party, I paſs to that we have for particular Perſons. If we are very much affected to a particular Man, there's nothing but what we can ſay againſt his Enemies. We truſt ſuch a Man with what we know at the Coſt

SECT. III

Cost of our Neighbour's Reputation. In fine, if he loves Detraction, we are sure to detract, to please him.

A Seventeenth Source, *Jealousy.*

It is the general Opinion of the World, That the Praises given to others, are so many secret Reproaches of their own Conduct, they therefore do every thing possible to free themselves from these Reproaches: For this end, they do their utmost to efface and raze out of our Minds, the good Opinion we have of other's Virtues. They seek all Occasions hereof, and inwardly rejoice and triumph when they have found them. An envious Man, tormented with his own Passion, persecutes others by Detraction. *Wrath is cruel, and Anger is outragious, but who can stand before Envy?* St. *Paul* joins Detraction, Jealousy and evil Suspicions together, to shew the Connection they have each with the other. Are not they very Criminal who endeavour to hurt those that have given them no cause for such ill Treatment? Whereas in reality the Merit of any ought to be a Motive to to others to praise them, and spread the sweet Odour of their Renown still farther. When we wou'd tarnish their good Qualities, do we not endeavour to obscure the Gifts and Graces of the Lord?

Pro. 27. 4.

1 Tim. 6. 4.

Since

Since he is the Author of them. *Is thy Eye Evil, becauſe God is Good?* Should we not rather imitate the Conduct of *Moſes*, who, when one told him, That many propheſied in the Camp, which was looked upon as an Uſurpation of his Rights, and a Diminution of his Authority, anſwer'd in theſe Words, *Envieſt thou for my ſake? Would to God, that all the Lord's People were Prophets, and that the Lord would put his Spirit upon them.* Inſtead of ſpeaking Evil of them, and endeavouring to preſerve his own Credit by ruining them, he rejoiced in the Favour GOD had done his People, and reproved the Man who would have provoked him to Jealouſy. It is ſaid indeed by Detractors, that they don't blame what is good in others, nor ſpeak ill of any Thing but what is bad in them. But is it not certain, that ſome known Vices are more than ſufficient to diſcredit Perſons, altho' they may have many good Qualities beſides? And thus they injure them by ſpeaking only of their bad Qualities.

SECT. III

Matth. 20. 15.

Numb. 11. 29.

An Eighteenth Source, *Pride* and *Self-Love.*

Theſe were the firſt Vices wherewith *Adam* was corrupted; and which cauſed him to ſin; and he ſinn'd by giving way to them: Theſe alſo are the favourite Vices of his Poſterity. Theſe are our firſt Habits,

SECT. III Habits, and remain in us longest: For it is the Habit of this Sin, which he has principally left to his Children. Among the many Forms in which it shews it self, we easily perceive that of Detraction. *Solomon* says expressly of that sort of Detraction which is called Railery, *Proud & haughty Scorner is his Name who dealeth in proud Wrath.*

Pro 21. 24.

Here we may say,

First, Pride and Self-Love blind us so as that we don't know our own defects. Or if they suffer us to see them, it is in so small a Character, that we can hardly discover them. When we are going to consider our selves with respect to our Imperfections, we make use of those deceitful Glasses which represent Objects at a distance which is much greater than in Reality they are, or of those which make Objects appear much less than they usually do, or in a word, if we see these Faults in all their Light and such as they really are, we forget them, *as a Man that views himself in a Glass; as soon as he ceases to view himself, forgets what manner of Man he was.* Such a Man says secretly to himself with the Pride of the Pharisee in the Gospel, *I am not as other Men.* His very Pride hinders him from seeing that he is proud, when he back-bites others.

Jam. 1. 24.

Luk 18 11.

Secondly,

Secondly, This Vice makes our own Virtues and other Men's Vices appear very considerable. We then make use of those Glasses which represent Objects as near and large, tho' indeed they have this in common with the others, that they are equally deceitful. The Height of a Man appears as great as that of a Tree, to those Men who are half blind. They heap up all the Circumstances which may aggravate a Fault, but never mention those which might extenuate it. Upon the good Opinion they have of themselves and the evil Opinion they have of others, they fancy they have so much the better Foundation to detract from others, as they fancy others can have no hold of them. Self-Love on the Throne makes Tyrants, and Self-Love in Subjects makes Detractors, who are Tyrants to a Neighbour's Credit. Both would rule according to their Station and Manner, and imagine, that all others ought to be beneath them, because they only deserve to be above them, being unable to bear either Masters or Equals. They are unwilling to be first among the last; they would be first among the first. They who do not carry their Pride to so high a Degree, wou'd at least be placed in the second Rank, altho' they don't deserve to be in the sixth. SECT. III

Mark 8. 24.

SECT. III

I appeal for what I have ſaid and ſhall ſay, to the knowledge of every Man. Certain it is, if they examine themſelves, they will be obliged by the Strength and Evidence of Truth to confeſs, that what I have advanced is but too certain. Indeed, the Conſcience of one particular Man is but a ſingle Witneſs; but then join all the Conſciences of proud Detractors together, and you will find almoſt an Infinity of Witneſſes and Evidences.

Is it not real, is it not true, that Self-Love at what Time it perſwades us of our own fine and good Qualities prompts us to perſwade others thereof? But how? It is by caſting Shades on the Pictures we draw of our Neighbours, that ſo the Colours of ours may appear more bright and lively. Is it not true, that proud Detractors, fancying all due to themſelves, believe, they injure themſelves in praiſing others? That hereby they rob themſelves of a good which properly is their own; and they are as truly of this Opinion as it is falſe that they are the only deſerving Perſons. Building hereupon they take all from others, that ſo they may refer all to themſelves. This Self-Love belonging and appertaining to them, they are ready to believe, that all which may ſatisfy it, belongs to them alſo. Is it not true, that we wou'd have our ſelves alone talked of, and for this End endeavour to make

make others so contemptible, as that the World should say nothing at all of them, or else nothing that is good. Is it not further true, that as much as a Man loves to be himself set forth, so much he endeavours to suppress the Discourse upon other Persons? SECT. III

Is it not certain, That we wou'd have all the World love us, as much as we do our selves? As we love none but our selves, so we wou'd have others love none but us; and perswade 'em that we only are worthy of Love. To prove this we reckon up the Faults of others, which render them unworthy of our Love, as we pretend.

Oftentimes a love of vain Glory causes, That it is sufficient, that a Book has gain'd the Suffrage of the Publick, for a Man to undertake the task of discovering it's imperfections, that so he may shew himself one of much greater Wit, than the rest of Mankind, who have not with-held their Approbation for a Work which did not deserve it, as he endeavours to shew to the utmost of his Ability. These discoveries he sets much by; but being more easy to find Fault than to do better himself, he affords matter for other Criticks, to remark more Faults in his own Censures, than in the Works which he has been critizing upon.

SECT. III From hence it comes also, That a Man detracts from his Neighbour, thereby to insinuate, that he has a great Judgment in all things, that he knows how to make just Differences, that he very well knows the Heart of a Man, and that he perceives Faults which others do not. So that if any one praises a Man in his Presence, he will endeavour to shew that on the contrary he is blame-worthy that so he may tacitly degrade the Person praising and praised, and even those in the Company, below himself.

Hence also it happens that Persons who condemn gross Raillery, will yet approve of nice Detraction by their own Conduct. Why? Because Genius and Wit appear therein, and vain Glory finds it's Account in it. Should a Man say, *I am a learned Man, I am a Gentleman*, the Pride which he wou'd conceal, wou'd be too visible. This then is not the Way we take to make our selves esteemed. We therefore only speak of other Men's Vices, and do oppose them to our own Virtues, which indeed we do not mention; but even this perhaps is with a Design of obtaining a second Glory for a false Modesty.

In a word, The reason why we attribute so many like and common Effects as Hatred and others, to Pride and Detraction, is, because the former is the Source of the latter,

latter, from the Effect we trace the Cauſe. SECT. III
We many times detract from another, becauſe we love our ſelves beyond meaſure. But is not this Proceeding entirely unjuſt? What can be more ſo, than to deſire that others wou'd bear us as great Friendſhip as we do our ſelves, and at the ſame time for us to be againſt loving them, as we do our ſelves: what more unjuſt, than to ſhew as much hatred to them by our injurious Diſcourſe, as we wou'd have them ſhew Love to us? What can be more contradictory than our Sentiments on this Subject? We degrade, we decry Perſons, and yet if they were to applaud and commend us, we ſhould be raviſhed therewith. Strange that we ſhou'd think it an Honour to receive Praiſes from thoſe who in our Judgments, don't deſerve any themſelves! Does it not ſhew that this Self-Love is very blind, and that provided a Man will but flatter it, 'tis no matter who he is, or how he does it! To ſatisfy this Self-Love, we blame others, and to content it, we greedily catch at their Praiſes. What a Contradiction!

This Detraction and this vain Glory are very Criminal before God, who ſays to us by Solomon, *Be not wiſe in thine own Eyes*, Prov. 23 4. Let us follow the Exhortation of St. *Paul* who ſays, *In lowlineſs of Mind let each eſteem others better than themſelves.* And elſewhere, Phil. 2. 3.

Sect. III. 1 Cor. 4 7 *what hast thou that thou hast not received?* (If indeed thou hast received more Gifts and more Talents than thy Brethren,) *and if thou hast received it, why then dost thou vaunt thy self as tho' thou hadst not received it?* But thou knowest nothing, and thou boastest in vain, if thou art ignorant, that Pride and Detraction are Sins which God will punish. And if thou dost know this, remember, that Luke 12. 47. *he who knows his Master's Will, and does it not, shall be beaten with many stripes.* Art thou ignorant of what the Chap. 5 ver. 26. Apostle says to the Galatians? *Let us not be desirous of vain Glory, provoking one another.* Dost thou not know, that, speaking of the latter Times, he says, that 2 Tim 3. 2. *Men shall be lovers of themselves.*

An Nineteenth Source, *Wrath.*

Furor arma ministrat, Virg. This Passion is frequently one of the Sources of Detraction, Fury furnishes with Weapons: Now Detraction is one of the fiery Darts of the wicked One, who is Eph 6 16 called an Accuser of the Brethren: Fury then produces Detraction. This direful Passion deprives of Reason and Judgment, and quenches the Flames of Love. On a thousand Occasions it spares not Blows, how then should it spare Words? A furious

ous Man is not Master of himself, how then shou'd he hide what concerns his Neighbour? A Man can't be truly angry with another, but he will make him feel it, at least by his Discourse. Of this Passion the Apostle warns the World, saying, *Let not the Sun go down on your Wrath.* St. *James* declares, that *the Wrath of Man worketh not the Righteousness* (or fulfils not the Commandments) *of God.* SECT. III

Eph. 4. 25.

Chap. 1. ver. 20.

I know there are many who pretend to excuse their Detractions by saying, they were Angry and in a Passion, when they spake so. I acknowledge, there appears less premeditated Design herein, than in those who detract thro' Hatred, Self-Love or Envy. Nevertheless, as it is very blameworthy to be wrotha gainst our Neighbours, so Detraction, which results therefrom, is very much to be condemned. They are both Sins: How then can a Man pretend to excuse himself by covering one Vice with another? Can any one say, It was a Fire of Love which kindled this Wrath? Let us not then say, *I was drunk*, or, *I was mad*: seeing transgressions and complication of Sins, never make a Cause the better.

A Twentieth Source, *Hatred.*

It is very common, I own, to call those Persons, whom we speak ill of Friends.

SECT. II. But what ſhall we call Hatred, if this be not that evil Principle which leads us to hurt them, either in their Honour or any other of their Goods? It may chance, that a Man will flatter thoſe whoſe Wrath he fears, or whoſe Smiles he deſires, either in their own Preſence, or before their Friends, but a Man will never ſpeak ill of thoſe whom he truly loves. This is quite contradictory; and in this regard, Light and Darkneſs can never agree. This is ſo true, That we can't even ſee the Defects of one we love. We call thoſe Things Virtues in him, which in another we ſhould name Vices: Or if we perceive his Defects, we do our utmoſt to hide them. Conſequently, Hatred makes a Man detract, and from Hatred ariſes the Pleaſure we take in hearing th ſe Perſons ſpoken ill of, whom we don't affect, which in it ſelf is a conceived Detraction, and will doubtleſs quickly bring forth.

The Cauſe of this Hatred is frequently the moſt frivolous imaginable: Sometimes, becauſe a Man has not followed our Advice; or has not entruſted us with a Secret that we wanted to know, or ſome other ſuch matter of as little importance.

Moreover, altho' the Cauſe of Hatred may be frivolous, yet the Sin is not ſo: The holy Scripture orders us to love even theſe that hate us moſt.

A

A Twenty-first Source, *Revenge.* SECT. III

Detraction is certainly one of the most sure and common Ways of testifying our Resentment and Revenge. We many times detract *before* we have revenged our selves, in some other way than that of the Tongue, to shew that we shall have cause so to do; or else *after*, to shew that we had reason for so doing, and to justify our revenge.

How many Persons do we see detract to revenge themselves on some-body who had spoken slightily of them before?

In a Word, Wou'd you be revenged of your Enemy, Go and tell some-body, that his Enemy has spoken ill of him; doubtless if the latter can, and if he be not one who fears GOD, he will, do him all the Hurt possible, and so you will be revenged by his revenging himself.

I say that Detraction is one of the most certain means of Revenge, because that truly we can't hardly do a Man more hurt than to take away his Reputation. But if this be a most sure way to hurt others, it is a most certain way to destroy one's self; since St. *Paul* expressly forbids it: *Dearly beloved*, says he, *Avenge not your selves, but rather give place unto Wrath; for it is written, Vengeance is mine: I will* Rom. 12. 19.

Sect. III *repay, ſaith the Lord.* Is not this Prohibition expreſs both from the Maſter, and from the Diſciple?

In a word, We ſhould reſtrain by all means our Prejudices, Illuſions and Paſſions, which ſo eagerly urge us on to back-bite thoſe, who have ſtirred them up; and thereby we ſhall put an End to the moſt ordinary Sources of this Sin, and which contribute not a little to make it a Sin.

Reflections *upon what has been ſaid in this Section.*

THE Heart perhaps has not more Veſſels, which receive the Blood, and cauſe it to circulate thro' the human Body, than Detraction has Sources, which carry it thro' the Body politic. We need not then be aſtoniſhed, that it is ſo very common in the World, as we ſee it to be when all theſe various ways are made uſe of, and cloathed under ſo many different Garbs, I own that all theſe various Sources are not ordinarily found at the ſame Time and in the ſame Perſon. But then one of them is ſufficient to produce a thouſand Detractions, Stories and Railleries; beſides they may be all met with at different Times.

Theſe

Sect. III

These Sources are not only the Causes of, and precede Detraction, but they even accompany it, and as it were incorporated with it, and make a Part of it; as the first matter with which we kindle a Pile of Wood, is a Cause, an Accessary, and a Part of the Fire, which results therefrom. For Instance, a Detraction which arises from Pride shall be fill'd up with arrogant Terms, and related with an Air of Haughtiness. Another, which proceeds from an hypocritical Bottom, shall be told with an apparently modest Visage in him that tells it, and with a Tone of a tender and compassionate Voice. A Third, that proceeds from Wrath or Revenge, shall carry along with it the marks of these Passions.

We have tho't it convenient to shew not only the Sources of Detraction, but also how unjust and criminal they are, that so we may make use of these Considerations when we have fallen into it, as of a Proof of the greatness of the Sin of Detraction, whose Sources are so much to be condemned.

We may also acquaint the Reader, That all Vices have so great Reference to and Connection with each other, that what we apply to a particular Source of this Vice, may be also referred to some other. Example, We have said some things that are alike, on the Subject of Hatred and Hypocrisy,

Sect. III pocrisy, because a Man will many Times make use of Hypocrisy to cover his Hatred, or sometimes Hypocrisy is a covered Hatred. And Detraction makes use of them both.

Each of the Sources already mentioned does not always and only produce Detraction, for Revenge, Coveteousness, *&c.* have many other Effects. But they do produce Detraction many Times and according to the different Temperaments of Persons.

The Uses *of this Section.*

LET us consider first of all, what an horrible sort of Monster this Detraction is, being produced by Sins of so many different Kinds, as by Love and Hatred, Contempt and Glory, by Complaisance for some, and Anger against others. Does it not look as if *a Kingdom thus divided could not stand*? It never could, did not Men take the greatest Care to re-unite such divided Parties in their Hearts thereby to form this Giant.

Mat. 12. 24.

Let us here make some Reflections on the external Sources of Detraction. First on the Subject of Prosperity. It is a very slippery

slippery Path, and most who walk in it fall into the Sin we are arguing against. Moreover, as this State has nothing evil in it self, we are not commonly on our Watch against it, and it's Effects. We ought then to be doubly watchful; on the one hand, against those Temptations we are then exposed to, and on the other, against the Security and Inadvertance we live in under such a flourishing Condition. SECT. III

Sure I am, this Application and Regard we demand, will appear very reasonable, if we reflect, that when we are not on our Guard, we are in eminent Danger of horribly offending GOD by a proud Ingratitude, and of feeling the terrible Effects of his Justice, after and because that we have abused the Effects of his Love and Grace.

As to the evil Examples, we still recommend this Attention to you, that so you may not suffer your selves to be seduced by them. Frontier Cities are the best guarded with every thing that may serve for their Defence, because they are most exposed to the Enemy's Attacks: Thus be ye the more on your Watch inasmuch as ye are continually blocked up, as I may say, by Legions of Detractors. If you must imitate some-body and follow Examples, let it be that of JESUS CHRIST who has left us a Pattern that we may follow his Steps. 1 Pet. 2. 21.

This

SECT. III This Watchfulneſs we are ſpeaking of, ought to have place with reſpect to the frequent Occaſions for Detraction. We ſhould be on our Guard that we go not where theſe Occaſions preſent.

As to Impunity, You ought not to think that you may therefore abandon your ſelf to Diſſolution, for if your Detraction be ſeldom puniſhed in this World by the Magiſtrate, yet it will be eternally puniſhed in the other World; and that the Applauſes you may gain on Earth on Account of your Railleries, will be changed into dreadful Confuſion in Hell.

In a word, Conſider, that if it requires neither Coſt, Money nor Trouble to detract, yet it coſts nothing to refrain detracting: And that if this Vice be ſo compatible with many others, it muſt needs be a very great Vice; for a Man muſt be exceeding vicious to accommodate himſelf to all Vices.

As we have ſhewn the Sin and Baſeneſs of the Sources we call internal, we ſhall here only exhort you to reflect, that moſt of them are hurtful and detrimental to thoſe in whom they are found, as they are accompanied with Trouble and Vexation: For truly who can be eaſy when he ſees himſelf torn by Hatred, Wrath, Revenge, *&c. The merciful Man doeth good to his own Soul, but he that is cruel, troubleth*

Prov. 11. 17.

bleth his own Fleſh. O! Detractors, we have diſcovered the true Cauſes of your Detraction, ſeek then no longer to hide them. Say no longer, that it is your Love to Virtue and Truth, which makes you back-bite the Wicked. No, it is your Hypocriſy. Say no more, that it is becauſe you wou'd do Juſtice to all the World. No, it is your Self-Love. Say no more, that it is becauſe you hate Flattery. No, it is your Jealouſy. And ſo of the reſt. SECT. III

There are many of theſe Sources, which ſhould be abſolutely baniſhed. Such are Curioſity, Idleneſs, Drunkenneſs, Impudence, Levity, Raſh Judgment, Ingratitude, and Hypocriſy.

There are others, which need only be rectified, and which may change their Nature without changing their Name. Thus we may make the Deſire of talking ſerve to bleſs GOD and Man; Complaiſance to be gentle as GOD requires; a contradictory Spirit to attack Vices; Coveteouſneſs to be ſparing of Invectives againſt our Neighbours; Jealouſy to endeavour to ſurpaſs others in Piety; Self-Love to do our utmoſt to gain the ineſtimable good Things of Paradiſe by our Charity. Thus you ought to turn the Courſe of theſe Sources, which otherwiſe will make a terrible Ruin, and deſtroy all that

ſhall

Sect. III shall be found exposed to their Inundation, to the Prejudice of other Men.

Let us turn them against our selves, that so they may carry away our Sins After this manner, these Sources of Blood may again become agreeable and pure.

SECTION IV.

Wherein is proved, That Detraction *is a Sin.*

ARTICLE *I.*

The Law of GOD expressly forbids it.

Sect. IV IN discoursing of the Sources of Detraction, we have shewn, That most of it's Causes are Trespasses of the divine Law: Let us now see the express Prohibitions made against committing it.

The *First* we mention is from *Levit.* 19. Ver. 16. *Thou shalt not go up and down as a Tale-bearer among my People.* That is, Thou shalt not go about to inform thy self of Persons Lives and their Faults, that so thou may'st inform others of them, and reciprocally to tell the first, or others, what thou hast

haſt heard of the laſt: Not that GOD con- SECT. IV.
demns only this ſort of Detraction, but
becauſe thoſe who make a Buſineſs of de-
tracting from their Neighbours, are moſt
blameable: Thoſe Words, *Among thy People*, ſhew that thoſe Men are more criminal, who detract from thoſe of their own Nation. Thus it follows, That Detraction is an Evil, ſince GOD, who forbids nothing but what is evil, has forbidden it.

A *Second* Prohibition is in *Prov.* ch. 24. Ver. 28, *Be not Witneſs againſt thy Neighbour without a Cauſe.* We ſay, That Detraction is here forbidden, becauſe in reality it is a Witneſs brought againſt our Neighbour without a Cauſe, when neither the care of our own Honour, and our own Vindication, when alſo neither any publick Good, or the Magiſtrate requires it of us. Theſe Words refer ſo much to Detraction, that it ſeems to me that they might be made the Definition of it. Thus as on the one hand, we are forbidden to hide or diſguiſe the Truth, when we are called to tell it; even ſo on the other hand, we are not to diſcover it to the Prejudice of our Brethren, when humane and divine Laws do not engage us thereto. What *Solomon* adds in the ſame Verſe, *For why wilt thou make believe with thy Lips*, ſhews that Deceit

is

SECT. IV is a Source of Detraction, as has been already ſhewn.

Thirdly, St. *Paul* forbids Detraction in
Ver. 15. Eph. 4. *Let all Bitterneſs, and Wrath, and Anger, and Clamour, and Evil-ſpeaking be put away from you.*

Fourthly, The ſame Apoſtle ſays in Col. 3. *But now put ye off all Anger,*
Ver. 8. *Wrath, Detraction.* After he had repreſented to them the Sins, with which they were ſtained during their Paganiſm, the Apoſtle warns them to lead a more pure and holy Life in their State of Chriſtianity, and conſequently to avoid Anger, Wrath and Detraction, which are truly Sins, ſeeing they are oppoſite to Holineſs.

Fifthly, The Apoſtle writing to his
Ch. 3. ver. 2 Diſciple *Titus*, commands him to exhort Men to *ſpeak evil of no Man.* 'Tis true, The original Word may ſignify *to blaſpheme*, which properly regards the Divinity. But both the Origin of the Word, which ſignifys to blaſt a Man's Reputation and the Uſage of the ſacred Authors, who very often take it for, to *detract*, and the Circumſtances of this Text, plainly ſhew, that we may very well tranſlate it, *to ſpeak evil.* And truly the Deſign of St. *Paul* both before and after, is only to ſet before Men their Duty towards their Neighbours, and eſpecially in theſe Words, where he bids *them ſpeak evil of no man.*

Sixthly,

Sixthly, St. *James* expreſſly forbids us to *ſpeak Evil one of another*, wherein he forbids us to ſpeak evil, not only, when no one has given Occaſion therefor, but even when another has formerly back-bitten us; ſo that we are not to detract from the very Aggreſſors. SECT IV. Chap. 4 11.

ARTICLE *II.*

Wherein it is proved, That Detraction *is a* Sin, *by Conſequences drawn from Paſſages out of the Old Teſtament.*

DEtraction is a very great Sin, ſince it is contrary to three Precepts of GOD's Law.

Firſt, To the Sixth Command, *Thou ſhalt not kill.* What makes me ſay, that Detraction is a kind of Murder, is,

1. Becauſe it takes from the Detracted, that ſort of Life which conſiſts in being loved by, or dear to Men (which is at leaſt one Pleaſures of Life,) by deſtroying the good Opinion which are very often inſeperable from humane Nature. If then we take away this Life of the Soul, we do in ſome way Murder the Man; we deſtroy the Soul as far as a Spiritual Nature can be deſtroyed, which being in it ſelf im-

SECT. IV

mortal, can experience no other Death than the Pains it suffers, among which the loss of Honour is one of the most touching.

2. Because the Tongue of Detractors is ordinarily in the holy Scripture, and especially in *Psalms*, compared to a Dart, a Sword, an Arrow, and to all the Instruments Men make use of to take away the Life of Enemies; whereby we understand, that Detractors are true Murderers, except that these aim only at the Spirit & Reputation, and the others at the Bodies of their Neighbours.

Psal. 120. 4. Prov. 25. 18.

3. What shews that this Sin does as much Evil as Assassination on many Occasions is, that there have always been an infinite Number of Persons, who choose rather to lose their Life, than to preserve it, after the Loss of their Credit & Reputation. Moreover, there are others to whom a good Name is so necessary, that if they lose it, they are put beyond a possibility of preserving their own, and their Families Lives: Such is the Condition of Merchants, Tradesmen, and almost all the World. This made St. *Chrysostom* compare Detractors to Man-Eaters, saying, *Let the Mouth also fast by abstaining from shameful & destructive Words: For what will it profit us, if while we refrain eating Birds and Fishes, we devour and eat up our Brethren? He that detracts, eats*

Ad Populum Antioche. Hom. 3.

eats the Flesh of his Brethren and bites the Flesh of his Neighbours. What Christian wou'd not shrink with Horror to eat a Man's Flesh? and yet, according to St. *Chrysostom*, this is what a Detractor does. SECT. IV

Secondly, Detraction is directly contrary to the eighth Commandment, *Thou shalt not Steal.* Who can deny that this a true Theft? Seeing it ravishes from our Neighbour a Benefit which does not belong to the Ravisher, even his Reputation; a thing so precious, that *Solomon* assures us, *it is better than great Riches.* So that to take it from him is many times to do him more mischief, than to take away his Goods and his Money. Prov. 22. 1.

Some will say perhaps, that Reputation is not of the nature of these other good Things, which we may obtain and enjoy without the help of another; whereas Reputation entirely depends on others, and consequently one may take it away without ravishing from a Man any thing which properly belonged to him. I answer in a few Words; It matters little how we enjoy a good Name; and suppose it be by the Judgment and Liberality of another, it is sufficient, that it was given to a Man as his own; and if it belongs to him, we can't take it away without being Thieves.

Some may say, that Men have not a just Title to a good Name, and so it may

Sect. IV

be taken from them without Theft. I anſwer, that ſuppoſing what ſuch Men advances was true, the Conſequence wou'd not be juſt; becauſe we have ſtill leſs title to take this good Thing away. What further ſhews the Horror of Detraction is, That it is very likely that ſome of thoſe, who make no ſtick at taking away a Man's Honour, wou'd not make much Scruple to kill a Man right out, or to rob him of his worldly Goods, if he had the ſame Occaſions. This made *Quintilian* ſay, That he who detracts differs not from him who does Evil, but by Occaſions, *Maledicus a Malefico non differt niſi Occaſione.* And *Zoilus* being ask'd why he took ſo great a Pleaſure in Detraction? anſwer'd, *Becauſe, envious as I am, I can do no other hurt.*

In fine, Detraction is contrary to the NinthCommandment, *Thou ſhalt not bear falſe Witneſs againſt thy Neighbour.* I own, that to take theſe Words according to the ordinary Signification, they ſpeak only of falſe Witneſs, Lies and Calumnies. But all agree, that we ought to give a larger Extent to the Precepts of this Law (ſee what JESUS CHRIST ſays hereupon, *Matt. 5.*) and that when it ſeems to forbid but one Vice, it nevertheleſs condemns all thoſe which have any reference to it. I don't ſuppoſe that we go beyond

beyond the Intention of GOD, by saying, that Detraction is comprized in these Words any more than by affirming, that Calumny and Detraction are many Times confounded together in various Passages of Scripture. SECT. IV.

Still further, altho' Calumny be on some accounts more criminal than Detraction, nevertheless it must be owned, that the latter is in other regards more terrible than the former, because more difficult and even impossible to remedy. We may repair the Reputation of another, whom we have detracted from by telling the Truth, and acknowledging that the Evil we said of him was a Lye; but we can never repair the Reputation of another, whom we have slandered, while we spake Truth, except by Lying, that is by saying that what we related of him was not true. I may say farther, that even this Lye will not re-establish a Man's Honour. For how will it be possible to make the World believe that to be false, contrary to their own Light, which we have formerly clearly shewn to be true.

Besides what we find in the divine Law which forbids Detractions, we may also draw many Consequences against it, from divers other Passages of the Old Testament.

David in *Psal.* 1, 2. ranks in the Number of those who shall dwell in the Tabernacle of the Lord, him, *That back-biteth*

Sect. IV *not with his Tongue, nor doeth Evil to his Neighbour, nor taketh up a Reproach againſt his Neighbour.* Here not only Detraction is expreſſly named, but it is further characterized by one of it's almoſt infallible Effects, which is *to do Evil to his Neighbour.* And it is principally becauſe of the Evil which it does to him, that the Holy Spirit, ſaying to us by the Mouth of the Pſalmiſt, that *he who does not back-bite ſhall abide in the Tabernacle of GOD*, teaches us, that the oppoſite Perſon, he who does detract, ſhall not enter into this Tabernacle of Joy, of Glory, of Holineſs and of Happineſs, in the Heaven where GOD dwells. This is a ſufficient Proof, that Detraction is a Sin, inaſmuch as it will deprive thoſe Perſons of Heaven, who make uſe of it and ſpread it abroad.

Ver. 5.

The ſame *David* ſays to us in *Pſal.* 101. *Whoſoever privily ſlandereth his Neighbour, him will I cut off.* This holy Prophet thro' this whole Song, declares that he will put far from him the Wicked and Sinners, among whom he reckons Detractors; it then follows that Detraction is a Sin.

Becauſe it is a Sin, *Jeremy* places it in his Catalogue and among the Complaints which he made of the Crimes of the Jews.

Jer. 6. 28. *They are all ſtubborn*, ſays he, *and more than ſtubborn, and they go about ſlandering; they are as Braſs and Iron; they are as Perſons, who deſtroy one another.*

Here

Here I can't help obſerving Three Characters of Detraction or Detractors; SECT. IV

1. That they are as Braſs, which makes a Noiſe when ſtruck, and which has ſome Splendour, but which after all is but of little Worth and Value. 2. They are like Iron, which by it's weight and hardneſs cruſhes thoſe on whom it falls. 3. That by mutual Detractions, they deſtroyed one another.

This ſame Prophet ranks this Vice among many others, which he ſpeaks of in Chap. 9. *Take ye heed every one of his intimate Friend, and truſt ye not in any Brother; for every Brother makes a buſineſs of ſupplanting, and every intimate Friend,* (that is, which calls himſelf ſuch) *goes about detracting. Truſt not to any Brother,* beware how you let him into your Secrets, leſt he make uſe of your Frankneſs and ſupplant you, and when you have diſcovered your own Defects, he back-bite you. Since then this Prophet ranks Detraction among Sins, it is certainly a Sin in it ſelf. Ver. 4.

ARTICLE *III.*

Detraction proved to be a Sin by Paſſages taken from the New-Teſtament.

1. OUR Lord JESUS CHRIST ranks Detractions among thoſe evil Things

SECT. IV which proceed from the Heart, and defile the Man; and he distinguishes them from Calumnies, which he names *false Witnesses*. If then Detractions defile a Man, they are consequently Sins. He speaks of them in the plural Number, that so he may comprehend all sorts of them.

Matth. 15. 18, 19.

Ver. 29, 30. 2. St. *Paul* in *Rom.* ch. 1. relating the Sins in which the Heathen were plunged, joins Detractions with their other Excesses, and distinguishes between simple Detractors and Calumniators, whom he calls *Inventers of Evils* or evil Things. The Apostle joins this Sin with others that are so horrible, that we can't doubt but it is very abominable before GOD. In such a Company, it must be very detestable.

3. The same holy Man in 1 *Cor.* ch. 5. makes it plain to us, That it is a frightful Sin, seeing he forbids us even to eat with such as are charged with it, and orders them to be excommunicated the Body of the Church, as Persons who do not deserve to be found among Believers. How empty would our Churches be now-a-days, if all Detractors were cast out of them! But also how much more agreable wou'd our Assemblies be to GOD!

Chap. 6. ver. 10. In this same Epistle, he ranks among those who shall not inherit the Kingdom of GOD, *Revilers*, whom he reckons among the greatest Sinners. But because some perhaps

perhaps might flatter themſelves, either that theſe Sins were inconſiderable, or that GOD wou'd eaſily pardon them, He ſays, *Be not deceived*, all thoſe who commit them ſhall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven, which ſhews at the ſame Time the infallible Chaſtiſement and the Enormity of the Sins. And in the 12th of his ſecond Epiſtle to the *Corinthians* he fears, that Detraction will be among the Sins to be found with them. SECT. IV. Ver 20.

5. In *Phil.* 4. He exhorts them to think on *things that are lovely and of good Report, and where there is any Virtue and Praiſe.* And herein he exhorts them to flee Detraction, which has nothing lovely in it, and which is a Sin, as has been already ſhewn, far from being a Virtue, and which is ſo far from being a Thing of good Report, that it takes away the good Name of a Neighbour and of all thoſe who do detract; which in a word, is ſo far from having any Praiſe, as that it is buſied in blaming others, and making it ſelf blameable; Detractors and Detracted being ſo. Ver. 8.

6. The ſame Apoſtle in his Epiſtle to the *Romans*, ch. 12. commands us *to prefer one another in honour.* We ought not then to back-bite one another, ſeeing Detraction tends only to the ſhame and ignominy of our Neighbours, far from contributing Ver. 10.

SECT. IV buting to their Honour. What can be more oppoſite than the Apoſtle's Precepts to the Practice of Detractors!

Chap. 3. ver. 2. 7. The ſame Apoſtle in 2 *Tim.* reckons Detraction among the horrible Sins which ſhall reign in the laſt Days. *Men*, ſays he, *ſhall be lovers of themſelves, vain, proud, defamers*, &c.

Ver. 19. 8. In 1 *Cor.* 6. He ſays, *Our Bodies are the Temples of the holy Spirit.* Our Mouth is a part of our Body; if then we defile our Mouth by Detraction (as has been already ſhewn that we do) it follows that thereby we defile the Temple of the holy Ghoſt, which cannot paſs for a Sin that is light and of little importance.

1 Pet. 2. 1. 9. St. *Peter* reckons *evil-ſpeaking* among the things we are to lay aſide, that is to ſay, among Sins.

ARTICLE *IV.*

That ſome of the particular Ways of detracting are Sins.

WE could doubtleſs make ſeparate Treatiſes on the different Ways of detracting, which we are about to mention under this Article; each of them affording ſufficient Matter for a Volume; but as

we

we shall stick to the whole, rather than to it's parts, we shall be very brief with respect to Stories, Railleries and Reproaches. SECT. IV.

Of *STORIES.*

Stories, as has been already shewn, are, one kind of Detraction, or one way of detracting. It is no less true, that Stories whose Design generally is to sow Divisions, are very great Sins against Charity, and oftentimes against the Fidelity, which we owe to those who have trusted their Secrets with us; a Fidelity that we violate every Time we reveal and relate them. *Solomon* has shown, That Story-tellers, at least those who reveal Secrets, sin against Fidelity, when he opposes them to those who possess this Virtue. *A Tale-bearer revealeth Secrets, but he that is of a faithful Spirit concealeth the Matter.* Prov. 11. 13.

When St. *Paul* reckons up the capital Sins of the Pagans, he counts their having been *Back-biters*, as one; and adds, *That they themselves knew the Judgment of GOD*, viz. *That they who do such Things are worthy of Death.* Which I think sufficiently proves, that these Stories are sinful. Rom. 1. 30.

Of *RAILLERY.*

David declares *the Man happy who has not set in the Seat of Scorners*, or *Railers.* Psal. 1. 1.

Unhappy

SECT. IV. Unhappy then and criminal are they who have sat therein. *Solomon* says, that *He who mocketh the Poor, reproacheth his Maker*; GOD, who is the Maker of the Railer, and him that is mocked. Consequently, it is a Crime no less than high Treason against the Divinity. He says likewise that *Judgments are prepared for Mockers.* Likewise *Isaiah* says, that *the scornful shall be consumed.* It is needless to add any more like Passages.

Prov. 14. 31. Prov. 19. 29. Ch. 29. 20.

Of *OUTRAGES & REPROACHES.*

These are expressly condemned in the Law of GOD. In the Prophet *Zephaniah* we have an evident Proof, that Invectives, those Injuries in Words, are Sins, inasmuch as GOD resolves that he will punish the People of *Moab* and the Children of *Ammon*, because they by these means had defamed the *Jews*, and assures them, that he will raze their Cities so that there shall not be any Marks of them left. Moreover, the Scripture requires the wicked to forsake his way, and the *injurious* Man his Tho'ts. Our Saviour himself declares to the *Jews* that *whosoever shall say to his Brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the Council*; *but whosoever shall say, Thou Fool, shall be in danger of Hell-Fire.* Interpreters are very much divided

Ch. 2. 8, 9. Isa. 55. 7. Matth. 5. 22.

divided about the ſignification of the word *Raca*; ſome pretend that it means a groſs Injury; others, a leſs Injury than the word *Fool*; others again, that by an Interjection it marks the Wrath and Indignation of him that ſpeaks it: But however this be, they muſt all own, That it marks the Contempt and Wrath of him that utters it on Account of the Faults or Wickedneſs of him to whom he addreſſes himſelf; and that by an alluſion to the different Tribunals of the Jews, CHRIST is here ſpeaking of the Judgments of GOD. SECT. IV

ARTICLE V.

Detraction is contrary to Charity.

IT will be very eaſy to ſhew this oppoſition by running the Compariſon between what St. *Paul* ſays of Charity, and the Nature of Detraction. *Charity is of a patient Spirit*, quite contrary to the Impatience of Detractors, who can't bear the Defects of others. *Charity is kind*, whereas Detraction is cruel, and does irreparable evil to thoſe whom it falls upon. *Charity is not envious*, but Detraction has Envy many Times for it's Source, as has been before ſhewn. *Charity vaunteth not it ſelf,* 1 Cor. ch. 13.

Sect. IV

self, Detraction on many occasions is insolent to the highest Degree. *Charity is not puffed up*, Detraction is frequently a consequent of Pride. *Charity does not behave it self unseemly*, Detraction tarnishes the Honour of our Neighbours. *Charity seeks not her own*, Detraction seeks nothing but it's own at others Cost. *Charity is not easily provoked*, Detraction is often the Effect of Spleen and Anger. *Charity thinks no evil*, Detraction necessarily thinks thereof; nay, it wou'd not be Detraction, if it did not think of evil, to relate it afterward. *Charity rejoices not in iniquity*, Detraction does; and truly if Men were troubled at the Sorrows & Faults of others, they would hide them, far from discovering them. *Charity easily believes the good we say of Persons*, but Detraction easily believes the ill that is said of them. *Charity hopes for the Conversion and Change of Sinners, and in this hope of future amendment hides present Faults*, but Detraction hopes for no good from them, and disparages them, looking upon their present State as that they must be in all their lives long. In a word, *Charity endures all things, it easily bears the burdens of others*, but Detraction will endure nothing, and never shews any Comfort to others. It will not excuse any thing, and hastens Revenge with the utmost Rigour. This

Gal. 6. 2.

This Parallel is pretty long; but there is this good in it, that it serves to shew, how Detraction is a great Sin, seeing nothing is so strongly recommended as it's Opposite, Charity, which is not only an abridgment of the Law and the Prophets, but even of the Gospel. And here it must be observed, that when the Scripture orders us to be charitable, it condemns Detraction two ways, 1. In that it orders us to contribute to the good of others, which we do not by Detraction. 2. It forbids us doing any hurt to others; now it is certain, that we do them a very great Damage, in taking away so precious a thing as their Honour. Thus it is a Sin of Commission and Omission. Besides what I have said, here is a reasoning which sufficiently proves that Detraction is contrary to Charity. Charity teaches us, that we ought to pray to GOD for our Brethren; but what state is a Man in to ask of GOD Prosperity for them, if he is endeavouring to take from them the dearest thing they have? Charity requires us to assist the Poor; but how can we give them an Alms, if we refuse them our Silence which costs nothing: Charity requires us to comfort Men under Afflictions; but how can we do that, if we our selves are the Authors of their Afflictions? Can a Fountain at the same Time send forth bitter Waters and sweet? No verily. Jam. 3. 11.

SECT. IV.

All

SECT. IV All thoſe Paſſages then which recommend Charity to us, do condemn Detraction, which is ſtill contrary to the Charity we owe our Neighbours in many other Ways; the ſpeaking of which we ſhall reſerve till we come to treat of the Effects of Detraction.

ARTICLE *VI.*

Detraction is contrary to Juſtice, and therefore a Sin.

HAving already ſhewn that Detraction is contrary to Charity, that were almoſt ſufficient to make us conclude, that it is contrary to Juſtice, for JESUS CHRIST has recommended Charity to us as a *juſt* thing; and truly is it not a *juſt* thing that we ſhould Love one another, as he has loved us, an ancient Father looked upon this Charity as a thing due; of which he ſaid, that it was a Debt we can never be diſcharged from.

Beſides, it is very certain and evident, that Detraction ſtrikes directly at this Precept, which is Natural as well as Evan-
Mat. 7.12. gelical, to do to others as we wou'd that they ſhou'd do unto us. What more clear than this? This Principle is ſo ſelf evident that

that it wont permit, nor does it need any reasonings to prove it. Now where is the Man who wou'd be very easy and willing to be spoken ill of? Doubtless there is no one who would, there being none but what choose to preserve their Honour and Reputation. SECT. IV.

But if there are some who say they should not be troubled if the World did speak ill of them; they do not then talk seriously, at least they don't Mind what they say; and would they consult themselves, they would find and acknowledge, that this is too repugnant to the Love they naturally bear themselves, not to be offended with those who take away what mostly flatters Interest and Self-Love. Upon this Principle engraved on the *fleshly Tables of the Hearts* of all Men, it is, That our Lord has established his Commandment of loving others as we love our selves. This Principle then must be very true, seeing GOD has built upon it. This Principle, I say, of doing to others as we desire they may do to us, is more sure than all the Demonstrations of *Geometry*, being established, explained and commanded by a GOD, who can neither be deceived nor deceive others. This is the Weight and the Measure to which all others must be conformed, otherwise they are false Rules, false Weights and false Ballances, which are

2 Cor. 3. 3.

Lev. 19. 36. Prov. 11. 1.

SECT. IV contrary to Justice & abominable to GOD. Since then Detraction is so opposite both to the Laws of Nature & those of the Gospel, it follows that it is a Sin, for *Sin is that which is contrary to the Law.* It is also contrary to that mutual, tho' tacit, Engagement Men enter into, when they are formed into civil Societies, of succouring and being helpful to each other reciprocally. But to tear each other to pieces, how is this helping and succouring each other? Detraction then is a Violation of this Engagement, and consequently an Act of Injustice, and *the Unrighteous shall not Inherit the Kingdom of GOD.* Learned Men have for a long Time disputed, and perhaps yet a great while will dispute, whether the Foundation and Rule of Justice ought to be the Profit of Society, or of our selves, or the Authority of the Laws given us by GOD. Without entring into their Differences, I say that the arguings of all, whatever they be, make against Detraction, which is contrary to the divine Laws, many Times to Self-Interest, and the good of Society, as we shall hereafter shew.

1 Joh. 3.4.

1 Cor. 6 9.

ARTICLE

ARTICLE VII. SECT. IV.

Detraction is contrary to the Attributes of GOD, and is a Character of the Devil.

1. IT is repugnant to that which makes the Essence of the adorable Being. *GOD is Love*, says, St. *John*, whereas Detraction is a Defect of Love. *GOD is unwilling that any should perish, but had rather that all should come to Repentance.* Detractors on the contrary endeavour to destroy others, as far as they can, and seem even to fear the Repentance of those whom they accuse. 1 Joh. 4.8. 2 Pet. 3.9.

2. This Sin is opposite to the Ways of his Wisdom, who seems to set before our Eyes the Defects of others, to teach us to know our selves; to shew us the Deformity of Vices in others, that so we may avoid them. But if their Imperfections make us Detractors, this is a going directly contrary to the Design of GOD; for then we see them without correcting them in our selves, which if we did, we should refrain speaking ill of them.

His Wisdom also permits Sin, to humble those who behold it in others as in a Mirrour, by considering, that it is the Frailty of humane Nature. But far from

SECT. IV this, Detractors do from thence take matter of Pride, and a Subject for raising themselves above their Neighbours.

3. Detraction makes a Breach as I may say, in the Omnipotence of GOD. To backbite others and judge them, is to encroach upon the Legislator himself. The Sinner has his Judge, who will at the last reveal his Crimes, if he persist in them, and thereupon render a Judgment conformable to his Law. But now to go about to expose and make known to this World those things which GOD has reserved for the next, is to encroach upon the Rights of GOD and to anticipate the Time. To him alone are Men to give up an Account of their Conduct, at least in a great many Cases. To discover it then to the Publick, as if it was to them, Men were accountable, is to place one's self in GOD's stead. On this Account it was that S. *James* said, *Be not many Masters, knowing that ye shall receive the greater Condemnation.*

James 3.1. See also Jam. 4.12.

4. This Vice does Violence to GOD's Justice. His Prerogative it is to render to every one according to his Works. Particular Persons then ought not here to render what belongs to GOD alone. When some have done ill Actions, 'tis not for others to cover them with the shame and ignominy, which answer the Filthiness of their

their deed. To GOD this Right belongs. If then Vertue consists in following and imitating the divine Perfections, it is a Vice, a Sin, directly to clash with them, as Detraction does. SECT. IV.

On the other Hand, As much as diabolical Vices are different from divine Perfections, so much do Detractors resemble the infernal Being. Who can doubt hereof, if it be true, that the Scripture attributes to him those Characters, which perfectly suit Detractors? Of him the Scripture say, *That he is an Accuser of the Brethren*? Him the Scripture affirm to be *as a roaring Lyon, seeking whom he may devour.* And is not this the Conduct of the others, who are continually seeking those whose Reputation they may tear in pieces? Nay, we may say that in some sort, Detractors are worse than the very Devils themselves, who do not endeavour to overthrow their own Kingdom, as Men endeavour to ruin one another by their Discourse. A Man need not be a Philosopher to draw the Consequence of this Conformity between Detractors and Satan, even, that they are Sinners as he is, and shall partake of his Punishments. Rev. 12. 10 1 Pet. 5. 8.

SECT. IV.

ARTICLE *VIII.*

Detraction *is contrary to the Design of* GOD *in giving us the Faculty of Speech.*

'TIS past doubt, That GOD's Design in creating Man, was, that he might receive Benedictions and Praises therein. Now there is no Means so agreable hereto as Man's Speech, which may contribute as much hereto, as a Creature is able by his Discourse and Thanksgivings. For this
Col. 3. 16. Cause St. *Paul* requires of us to have continually in our Mouths Psalms & Hymns, which are the same Things according to the Hebrew Etymology. Hence also it was, that He who composed so great a Number of them by the Inspiration of the holy Ghost, with such an holy Eloquence cry'd out, *Awake my Glory, I will praise thee O Lord among the People; I will*
Psal. 57. 8. 9. *sing unto thee among the Nations.* And again, *I will bless the Lord at all times,*
Psal. 34. 1. *his Praise shall be continually in my Mouth.* In a Word, hence it was, that the
Heb. 13 15. holy Apostle *Paul* exhorted the Hebrews, *to offer unto GOD the Fruit of their Lips,*
Jam. 3 9. and that S. *James*, said, *with the Tongue we bless GOD.*

But the Use Detractors make of their Mouths is quite different herefrom, and directly

directly contrary to GOD's Design; since they are so far from praising and honouring him, as that they Sin against his Prohibitions to Detraction, and thereby cause his Name to be blasphemed among Men. A second Design of GOD's allowing Men the Faculty of Speech, was, that it might be employed for their mutual help and edification. For this Reason it is, that we are created in such a state, as that we stand in very great need of each others Succour and Advice, whether in Matters of Piety, or in Affairs of civil Life. As to Religion, it is GOD's Will, that there should be Men more enlightned and more knowing than others, to instruct them in the Duties of Piety by publick and privateDiscourses. And with regard to civil Affairs, he has judged it meet, that they be in absolute need one of another, and that by the mean of Speech they communicate to each other their Necessities, that so they may maintain that Union among themselves, which he would have found among all Men. Had it been his Pleasure, he could have created Men as the Fowls of the Air, and Beasts of the Field, who without each others help, can satisfy their own needs: But as it was not his Pleasure to bestow this Advantage onMan, he has recompenced him by another, which is to demand of one another, what is ne- SECT. IV.

SECT. IV. ceſſary for them, and to be made happy in demanding, in giving and in receiving it, by their Communication and their Union, which contributes to the general good of the Society and to the private Advantage of every one of its Members, ſo that Men go contrary to the Intention of their Creator, when inſtead of improving the Gift of Speech to their help, they on the contrary make uſe thereof as Detractors do to annoy and deſtroy each other; when inſtead of faſtning the Ties of Concord among themſelves, they diſunite them. If then the right uſe of Speech be ſo neceſſary and requiſite to the Ends of GOD, the ill Uſe which by Detraction is made of it, is contrarywiſe oppoſite to theſe ſame Ends, and a very great Sin, inaſmuch as the Corruption of the beſt things is the worſt.

ARTICLE *IX.*

Detraction *is oppoſite to* humane Civility.

PErhaps Reaſons drawn from worldly Rules may make an Impreſſion on Worldlings. To ſuch we then ſay, that Detraction on many Occaſions is very contrary to Civility and Politeneſs.

For

For a Proof of this, I ſhall make uſe of the very Words of S. *Chryſoſtom* who ſpeaking of Detractors ſays, *What Pardon, what Excuſe ſhall we have, if we neglect thinking on our own Affairs, and curiouſly pry into thoſe of other Men? As it wou'd be a very unmannerly, ungenteel Action for a Traveller to enter a Houſe, and ſurvey all that is therein, ſo it is a Mark of extreme Incivilty, and of a Clowniſh Fellow, for any one to meddle with the Life of another.* SECT. IV

2. All the World agree, That Injuries, Invectives and ſcurrilous Expreſſions come only from the Rabble and Scum of a People; ſuch as have no Education, and who are ignorant even of the Principles of Honour, Decency and Civility. But are not theſe Invectives more excuſable, when they are not made in Preſence of thoſe they aim at? Not at all. This we ſhall ſhew in the following Article.

ARTICLE X.

Detraction *is a mean vile Sin.*

1. IT is certain, that all Mankind, eſpecially Men of Education & Honour, deſpiſe Traitors and look upon them as the

SECT. IV the meaneſt of Men. But Detractors are truly Traitors, when they attack their Enemies behind, and when they are in no Capacity to defend themſelves; ſo that the ſame Contempt that falls upon Traitors, falls equally upon Detractors.

2. We may compare Detractors to the meaneſt and moſt abject things in Nature. They are like thoſe Worms which gliſter only in the Night. For this Reaſon they wou'd offace the good Name of their Neighbours, they wou'd caſt Shades upon it, that by the help of theſe Shades they may ſhew themſelves to better Advantage: Whereas a true Diamond, ſparkles in the Blaze of the Sun, and needs not the Help of Darkneſs to be known.

3. Detractors may be compared to Apes, who act what they ſee in others. So Detractors relate the Evil they hear ſpoken of, or ſee done by their Neighbours. And truly no Animal approaches ſo near to a Man as an Ape; but the Man who reſembles an Ape, approaches terribly near to a Beaſt.

4. They may be likened to barking and biting Dogs, who feed upon ſtinking and infecting Carrion, and Ravens and ravenous Beaſts for the ſame Reaſon.

5. To Hogs, who trample Gold and Pearls under foot, and chuſe Dirt and Filthineſs for their Nouriſhment, and Vipers which kill Men with their Tongue. 6.

Mat. 7, 6.

6. To those Insects which are bred, and do live only in stinking, corrupted Water, because Detraction owes it's Birth and continuance in Being, to the Depravity and Corruption of a Neighbour's Manners. A *Bee* which is nourished with odoriferous Herbs and Flowers, produces agreable Honey; (if he stings he dies for it.) But a Person who is nourished, and whose Spirit is fed with the Ordures of Sin, cannot but produce rotten Fruits of Sin. SECT. IV Job 20. 16

7. Detractors are like fierce and savage Beasts. Hence it was that *Diogenes* being asked, *Of what Beast the bite was most venemous and dangerous*, answered, *Among savage Beasts, the Detractors; and among domestick, the Flatterers.* This shews us at the same Time, That the wisest among the Heathen, altho' they had only the Light of a Nature for a Guide, condemned this Vice. And truly one shall hardly ever meet with any thing finer hereupon than the Principles and Sentiments of *Chilon*, one of the seven wise Men of *Græce*, which a Modern thus describes, *He reckoned among the Qualities of a wise Man, those he himself possest; even to despise Injuries and Detractions, and to refrain from them, to know himself, and to be upon his Guard; not to insult the Miserable; to suppress his Anger, and to be moderate in his Sentiments.*

And

SECT. IV. And it is so true, That Detraction is a Sin that all Mankind allow it so to be, at least in some degree. This Universality is a strong Proof, or at least, a great Prejudice against Detraction. For it is impossible, That all should agree to be mistaken, to deceive themselves, and to establish an Error in the World. It is also so true, That Detraction is universally accounted a Vice, as that no one is willing to pass for a Detractor. Yea when a Man does actually backbite, he is unwilling to be tho't so to do. And there is no Man among those who are most given to Detraction, but wou'd think you did him an Injury, should you call him a Detractor. There is no Person but condemns Detraction, when it blasts his own Reputation. And pray, is it less condemnable when it blasts another's? No indeed. Why does a Man blame it more when it attacks himself, than when it attacks another? Truly because the Loss of his own Honour is more sensible, than the Damage done to others. But in reality this alters not the Thing: It's Nature is ever the same.

ARTICLE *XI.*

Detractors are ordinarily more faulty than those they talk of.

1. IT many Times happens that a Man will tell of an ill Action a hundred Times,

Times, which has been done but once. Hereby he Sins more than the Perſon who committed the Deed, yea Ninety nine Times more, according to my Suppoſition. I don't enquire at preſent, whether the Sin talked of be greater than Detraction. It may doubtleſs be either greater or leſs. But if Sins are to be meaſured, as indeed they ought, by the repeated Acts of Commiſſion, it is, clear, that he, who backbites a Perſon an hundred Times, on account of a Sin but once committed, is more faulty than the other. Theſe Men are like thoſe Echoes which repeat a Word many Times, that has been but once ſpoken. SECT. IV.

2. I ſuppoſe, as is very poſſible, that the Defects we reprehend, may be more light, more ſecret, and may have fewer aggravating Circumſtances than Detraction, and then certainly Detraction is more criminal than ſuch. It is frequently ſeen, that the Sins and Vices we blame in others, and which we ſpread abroad, are nothing near ſo great as Detraction.

3. 'Tis the common Practice of Detractors to ſpeak ill not of a ſingle Perſon only, but of many Hundreds. They blame the Manners and Conduct of many. But now every Perſon does not commit a Sin ſo many times. For Example, A Perſon has committed an Act of Injuſtice; but a Detractor will publiſh the Injuſtice of one Man,

Sect. IV

Man, the Lying of another, the Looseness of a third, &c. Those who are spoken ill of, have only their own Defects to answer for, but the Detractor is responsible for the Defects of Thousands, inasmuch as he has spake ill of so many. Thus all the Sins of others become his own, and it shall befall him, as it did the Victims sacrificed under the Law, upon which the People laid their Sins, by putting their hands on the Victim's Head, who was afterward slain. The Difference is, Detractors bring Death on themselves voluntarily, whereas the Beast sacrificed was not the Cause of his; and also the People laid on him their Iniquities, whereas Detractors bring the Faults of others on themselves of their own will.

Levit. 1. 4.

4. It frequently happens, that Detractors will relate more Sins in one or two Hours, than the Persons reproached have committed in one or two Years. Is it not evident that less Time is needed to tell a thing than to execute it? Is it not likewise certain, that the different thing we relate in one Hour, must require sometimes many Years to have been transacted in? Do we not see Persons, who in a very short Space of Time, have scan'd and examined the Life of others from their Infancy to their old Age.

ARTICLE

ARTICLE XII. SECT. IV

The Greatneſs of this Sin, ſhewn by ſome further Conſiderations.

1. ONE and the ſame Sin ſomewhat differently related, by ſeveral Perſons, yea even without any difference, but at various Times, will make a Man eaſily believe, that they are really new Sins, added to thoſe he had before heard of; which conſequently muſt ſtill farther hurt our neighbour's Reputation. Thus we afford ground for a ſort of Calumny, by giving Occaſion to make Folks believe our Neighbour worſe than he really is, and by laying more Faults to his Charge, than he has really committed. A great Sin this is, which Detractors lye open to, by giving Occaſion thro' their Diſcourſe, to Judgments ſo prejudicial to a Man's Reputation! 'Tis not perhaps one ſingle Perſon who gives ſuch Occaſion, but many together, and thereby all become Partakers in the Crime.

2. He who diſcovers a Thing to another, is in ſome manner reſponſible for all the Additions, which this ſecond Perſon may make to the Story; and thus he is blameable with that ſort of Calumny, which gives occaſion for thoſe who laſt hear the matter, to think all true, which others have before added to the Matter of Fact,

Sect. IV Fact, and for all which they put thereto of their own. The Fault it self was at first very small, but it has grown large by passing thro' so many Mouths, as a River, which swells as it glides along thro' many Countries, by the Rivulets it receives in its Course. 'Tis well known, that a good or a bad Name, far from wasting & losing its Strength by carrying, does on the contrary acquire new Strength. Thus we ordinarily see, that a Fault which in its original and nature was almost nothing, appears an enormous and a frightful Crime, after it has been spread abroad, and related many Times: and that an Indiscreet or Inadvertant Action has appeared an unpardonable thing by these means.

3. Tis a kind of Calumny, to say things that are false, or mixt of Truth & Falsity, altho' we relate only what other Detractors have told us for things entirely true. For on the one hand, it is a Calumny, to impute those Blots to a Neighbour, who is free from them; and on the other hand, a Detractor, whether he be the first Author of the Detraction or not, is answerable for all the Wrong that accrues to his Neighbour thereby. Thus the Fear of doing them so great Injury and of being ones self a Liar, should make Detraction hateful.

4. It

4. It is but too common, that this Sin is followed with Lying and falſe Oaths. When we reproach a Detractor to his Face with what he has ſaid, he will make no Difficulty (I ſpeak of a great Part of them) to deny, that he ever ſpake diſadvantageouſly of us, that thereby he may avoid our Reproaches and get covered from our reſentments; and if it be needful, he will ſwear he never ſpake in ſuch a manner. And truly, is it likely that he, who did not fear offending GOD by Detraction, ſhould fear ſinning againſt him by Lies and Oaths? SECT. IV.

Many Authors ſpeaking of Detraction, quote the Verſes which *S. Auſtin* wrote on his Table, againſt thoſe who were inclined to this Sin. We ſhall give them in Latin, in French and in Engliſh.

Quiſquis amat dictis Abſentum rodere famam,
Hanc menſam vetitam noverit eſſe ſibi.

In French thus explain'd,

Que Quiconque aime des Abſens
A dechirer l'honneur par dos mots offenſans,
Et Quiconque les de'credite,
Aprenne que pour lui ma Table eſt interdite.

In Engliſh,

Whoe'er delights the Abſents Fame to hurt,
Far from my Table let the Wretch depart.

Sect. IV

With good Reason did he place this Advertisement on his Table, Detraction being one Dish generally at a Feast. There we are for diverting the Mind as the Body is refreshed and nourished; but what is more criminal than, with our Tongues to offend that GOD whom we ought to glorify *whether we eat or drink*, at S. *Paul* has taught us?

1 Cor. 10. 31.

ARTICLE *XII.*

We are not well aware of the greatness of this Sin.

WHAT we have already said with reference to Detraction, proves, that it is a very great Vice, a very considerable Sin, seeing it violates all the second Table of the Law, which our Lord confines to *loving our Neighbour as our selves*, after the same manner that he has abridged all the Commandments of the first Table *to loving GOD with all our Heart and with all our Strength.* S. *Paul* following this Example says, *Love is the fulfilling of the Law*, which does no Evil to our Neighbour. He then that by Detractions fails of Love, and does Evil to his Neighbour, fulfills not the Law of GOD, and

Rom. 13

and consequently Sins. Notwithstanding all this, it is too certain, that the greatest Part of the World are not still well aware that this Sin is so great. We may see even that those, who have made considerable Progress in Piety, and who groan to see Corruption reign with such an high Hand as it does, will yet back-bite without almost any Scruple or Remorse. Whence can this be, unless that they don't believe it is such a terrible Sin as in reality it is? This Error is doubtless greatly upheld by the loose Maxims of some Casuists, who authorise Theft, Murder and Detraction, by holding, *that the Good which is found in Temporal things, is so slender, and of so little Consequence for Heaven, that it is of no Consideration before GOD and his Saints.* We have already shewn, that Reputation is no small Benefit, and we shall still further Prove it, and that the taking this Benefit away stirs Men up to Revenge and Hatred against the Robber, which things are very prejudicial to their Salvation: and we have lastly shewn, that GOD forbids Men thus to hurt others, and that thus this Sin is of great Consideration before GOD. SECT. IV.

There are others of these Casuists, or rather Corrupters of Morality, who have said in express Terms, that *Detraction is not a mortal Sin, when the Person detrac-*

Sect. IV *ted is really vile.* An Opinion, which has neither Proof nor Foundation in Scripture.

But some will doubtless say, that if Detraction be so great a Sin, and capable of excluding Heaven, there would be hardly any one saved, few Persons being exempt therefrom. I own there are but few saved compar'd with those who perish. So Christ taught us, saying, *many are called, but few are chosen*: That *the Way which leads to Life is strait, and few there be that find it*: That those who with the Generality of Men, *enter at the wide Gate*, and abandon themselves to Detraction, shall be deprived of Paradise. I say, secondly, that we hope that GOD will shew such Favour to many who are Detractors, as that they will abandon this Sin, and be converted.

Mat, 22, 14, Mat. 7, 13, 14,

The Uses of this Section.

WE shall say here what we have already said, that the Reasons we have alledged should make us entirely quit this Sin. As we have set these Reasons in a very great Light, and by many cogent Arguments shewn the Greatness and Enormity of Detraction, we would very strongly exhort you to fly it, and avoid the

the very Appearance thereof. Let us consider in how many Ways and by how many Laws it is condemned; by the most pure Law of Nature, by the most upright Law of *Moses*, and by the most clear Law of the Gospel, which all equally enter an Action against us, so that if we appeal from the Judgment of the one to that of the other, we ever lose the Case, for the Law of Grace it self most strongly condemns Detraction and Detractors. How then shall we avoid so great, so terrible a Judgment, and whose Consequents are so awful? Detractors shall suffer the Pains due to Injustice, the Pains due to Want of Love, the Pains due to Murder and Theft; seeing Detraction partakes of all these Sins. But if each of these Pains in particular be so terrible, how great must be the Torments of that Punishment, where they shall all meet together!

SECT. IV
1 Thes. 5. 22
Heb. 10. 27

Detraction offaces the Image of GOD in us, and instead thereof sets up the Image of Satan. They who are marked with this Stamp, and who bear this Image, belong to him, and he will one Day take Possession of them, even as the Coin which bears the Prince's Image belongs in some respects to the Prince, as our Lord told his Tempters. Let us then take heed, how we receive in us the Impression which gives this evil Spirit the Right of Sovereignty and

Mat. 22. 20

SECT. IV

Death over those in whom it is found. If Detraction makes us equal to what is most wicked, to the Principle of Wickedness, yea to Wickedness it self, it does also render us like to what is most filthy & loathsome among Brutes; it makes us, as I may say, twice Beasts. This is what was evinced when 'twas once shewn to what sort of Beasts Detractors might justly be compared. Happy were Detractors, if their Souls, as those of Beasts, died with their Bodies! If after they had been transformed into Beasts, Beasts might be transformed into Men, they would reproach Men with a Barbarity which they were strangers to, and might say to them, we wou'd not have done to Creatures of our own Species, as you have done; and you are far more cruel than we! Let the very Asses reprove *Balaam*'s when these are going to Curse People.

Numb. 22. 28.

The Use of Speech is doubtless a great Gift of Heaven, but it had been much better for us that we had never receiv'd it, if GOD had not given us the Use of Reason to govern and rule our Tongue, which without this wou'd be the Instrument of our greatest Evils. But do Men make Use of their Reason, when they detract? Reason requires, that we should bless him who has so liberally distinguished us from other living Creatures. But this is not all.

Tho'

Tho' Detractors ſhould bleſs GOD, yet while they detract, they act contrary to Reaſon, which requires us to uſe our Tongue for each others Benefit, and certainly they make uſe of it to a quite contrary End. *With the Tongue bleſs we GOD even the Father, and therewith curſe we Men, who are made after the ſimilitude of GOD. Out of the ſame Mouth proceedeth Bleſſing and Curſing. My Brethren, theſe things ought not ſo to be.* Thus S. *James* argues and thus alſo we do. He here includes two Propoſitions and a Cenſure. The firſt Propoſition is, that it is a Sin to curſe Men by reaſon, that they are made after the Image of GOD, and to offend thoſe who bear the Image, is to offend the Image it ſelf. The Second Propoſition is, that it is a manifeſt Contradiction, to bleſs GOD with one's Tongue, while at the ſame Time, with this very Tongue, we are wounding his Image in Man. The Cenſure is comprized in theſe Words, *My Brethren, theſe things ought not ſo to be.* All theſe Things ſhould hinder us from Detraction.

SECT. IV.

Jam. 3. 9, 10.

SECT.

SECTION V.

Of the various Circumstances *which aggravate this Sin.*

AS all Sins are not equally heinous, tho' they be all Sins, so a Sin of the same Kind may be greater or less, according to the Circumstances which accompany it. This we propose to shew with respect to Detraction, by relating many Circumstances, which may render it more criminal.

ARTICLE *I.*

Of the Circumstances which respect the Person detracted.

Circumstance First.

1. 'TIS a greater Sin to speak Evil of Parents, than of others, who are not so nearly related. Wherefore among that small Number of Commandments, which compose the Law of GOD, we find an express command ordering Children *to honour Father and Mother*: And S. *Paul*

Paul adds, that *this is the first Commandment with Promise.* They then who dishonour them by Detraction, violate this Precept; and, far from having a Share in these Promises made to pious Children, they may expect and wait for the Effect of the Threatnings the Scripture denounces against those, who despise the Persons to whom they are indebted for their Birth. SECT. V. Eph. 6. 2.

We know what was the Punishment of *Canaan* who discover'd his Father's Nakedness. To this Punishment are they exposed who discover their Parent's Nakedness and Defects: Defects are a true Nakedness according to the Language of Scripture, which calls Sinners, Persons that are *poor & blind and naked.* S. *Paul* also ranks among the frightful Sins of the Heathen, that of being *without natural Affection*, which was the Effect of that Punishment GOD had sent upon them, for having abandoned the Creator, and for having served the Creature. As far as Parricide exceeds bare Manslaughter, so far Detraction against Parents, surpasses in Enormity Detraction of those, who do not stand related to us. Gen. 9. 22. Rom. 3. 17. Rom. 1, 31.

This Crime is again redoubled, if after they have given us Birth, they have taken Care of our Education, and have taken Pains to furnish us with Soul-Goods, as well as those of the Body.

2. Parents

SECT. V

2. Parents ought not to backbite their Children. Nature it self seems to forbid this, having given them an Instinct, which prompts them to love that which bares their Image, (which occasioned the saying, that Children were the Medals of their Parents) and does as it were cause them to live after Death.

It seems also that the Law of *Moses* forbids this, when it prohibits *seething a Kid in it's Mother's Milk*; because it appear'd extreamly cruel, that what served to nourish it, should serve to destroy it. And is it not equally barbarous, that they who have given Being to their Children, should afterwards rob them of their Honour and Reputation, and all that is dear to them in this World? In fine, S. *Paul* expresly commands them, *not to provoke their Children to Wrath.* What is there more capable of roiling, provoking and vexing them than to backbite them? and yet History furnishes us with Examples of such Parents; tho' they are generally more apt to tell Lies to excuse their Children, than to tell the Truth in accusing them.

Exod. 23. 19.

Eph. 6. 4.

Circumstance Second.

For Brothers to detract from one another, is a more heinous Sin of Detraction, because Nature requires, that there be more

more of Union between them. But this Claim which is naturally between them, very often produces an Effect quite contrary to what it ought. As they see each other the oftener, and so know better the Defects one of another, and their blended Interests give more Occasion for mutual Disputes and Detractions. Let such know, that a *Brother is born for the Time of Adversity*, that is, to comfort his Brethren and Sisters in the Time of their Adversity: 'Tis not then for them to cause this Adversity, this Loss of Reputation, which they ought to maintain according to divine and humane Laws. GOD declares that He will punish such as break these intimate Ties. *Thou givest thy Mouth to Evil and thy Tongue frameth Deceit. Thou sittest and speakest against thy Brother; Thou slandrest thine own Mother's Son. These Things hast thou done, and I kept silence; thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an One as thy self; but I will reprove thee, and set them in order before thine Eyes.* Oh! How much more reserved should we be in our Talk, if we were fully perswaded, or if we well consider'd, what *David* here says! (1.) That GOD knows every Word we say. (2.) That he keeps an exact Account thereof. (3.) That He will one Day set all our Detractions before our Eyes, to convince us that we

SECT. IV

Prov 17. 17

Psal 50. 19, 20, 21.

SECT. V. we have deserved Death by them. (4.) That he will truly and really punish us for them. (5.) That tho' sometimes he defer punishing of us in this World, yet we are not to think that he will let our Abuse of his Patience and Long-suffering go always unpunished; but that the Day will come, when he will make us to bear the Punishment due to our Offences.

2. By these same Reasons, their Sin is aggravated, who endeavour to sow Divisions among Brethren, Sisters, Relations. And this (1.) Because they strike at the Bands of an Union & Friendship between these Persons, whose Union ought to be sacred. (2.) Because when once Hatred is stirred up between them, it is almost impossible that they should be reconciled. *Their* Hatred is more implacable and more durable, as *Solomon* testifies & Experience warrants. *A Brother offended*, (says that Prince) *is harder to be won than a strong City, and their Contentions are like the Bars of a Castle.* Hence it is that he ranks among the abominable Things which the Lord hateth, *Him that soweth Discord among Brethren.*

Prov18 19

Prov. 6 19

Circumstance Third.

An Husband commits a very considerable Sin, when he speaks ill of his Wife.

S.

S. *Peter* commands Husbands to honour their Wives, and to carry it respectfully to them, as to the weaker Vessels, that is, if by an Infirmity cleaving to their Sex, they happen to fail, their Husbands ought not to defame them for it. S. *Paul* in many places of his Epistle commands *Husbands to Love their Wives, even as Jesus Christ has loved his Church, his mystical Spouse and gave himself for it.* Eph. 5. 25. But how are they loved and honoured, if their good Name is taken away from them. Is Love expreſt to Persons by sullying their Reputation? They who observe not this Precept do without doubt sin doubly, being obliged to love them as Believers, and Members of the Church, which is the Body of the Lord; and also, as Spouses. Besides this, they sin not only as Detractors, but vastly more as perjured Persons, having promised to Love and Honour them at their Espousals. In a word, it shews great Imprudence to speak ill of Persons who so nearly touch them. After Marriage, the Couple become but one Flesh, and so the Faults of the one reflect on the other, and a Man dishonours himself by dishonouring his Wife. The holy Scripture furnishes us with an admirable Example in this Case, and worthy of Imitation by all Husbands; 'tis that of *Joseph*, of whom S. *Matthew*, when speaking of him and his espoused Chap. 1, 19. Wife,

SECT. V.

SECT. V. Wife, says, *that he sought to put her away privately*, (having known that she was with Child,) *because he was a righteous Man, and not willing to make her a publick Example.*

What I have said of Husbands must be understood of Wifes, the Reasons being equal for the one as for the other, and Wives ought to be regulated by the same Commands. So that I can't approve of *Abigail*'s Conduct, wise as she was in all the rest, who call'd her Husband *a Fool*, before *David*, and to pacify his Wrath.

1 Sam. 15. 25.

Circumstance Fourth.

To speak Evil of Sovereigns is one of the highest Degrees of Sin that Detraction can rise to. St. *Peter* commands us to *honour the King*: and this Honour is doubtless a Tribute we owe unto him, according to S. *Paul* in *Rom.* 13, 7. In the old Testament it is expressly said, *Thou shalt not revile the Ruler of thy People.* The Title of *gods* which the holy Spirit gives them, that is, of Persons, who next to GOD, hold the highest Rank among Men, and who, by the Authority which GOD and Men have bestowed on them, bear an Image of the Power of Lord of Lords; This Title, I say, carrys a very strong Reason with it, why we should refrain backbiting them.

1 Pet. 2, 17.

Deut. 22, 28. See also Acts 23, 5

2. Their

2. Their Designs are ordinarily concealed and their Views reach farther than we can penetrate; so that on many Occasions it would be great Rashness to disapprove of what they say and do, which at first sight might appear Evil. *Solomon* teaches us how impenetrable their Hearts are, when he says, *The Heaven for height, and the Earth for depth, and the Heart of Kings is unsearchable.* Prov. 25. 3. SECT. V.

3. Our own Interest obliges us to refrain backbiting them. They have Power in their Hands, and can revenge the Detractions spread abroad against their Persons. *They bear not the Sword in vain*, says the Apostle of the *Gentiles*; and so *Solomon*, *The Wrath of a King is as the roaring of a Lion, and he that stirreth it up, wrongeth his own Soul.* Rom. 13. Prov. 19. 12.

To conclude, Altho' we should avoid the Effects of their Resentment, yet it will be impossible to escape the Punishment of GOD, who will show that He won't fail chastising in the other World, those who have failed in their Respect to their lawful Sovereigns, and have detracted from them seeing he has even in this World sometimes punished them for daring so to do: Of this we have a very remarkable Instance in *Miriam*, recorded in *Numb.* 12. This Woman having spoken Ill of *Moses*, the Head and Leader of the People, GOD smote her Ver 12.

with

Sect. V. with the Leproſy, and that at a Time when the Puniſhment of Retaliation, or the Reſemblance of Puniſhments to Sins, was in Uſe; which teaches us, That if Detraction be as catching as the Leproſy, it is alſo, like it, an impure, a loathſome and an odious Malady.

2. With regard to foreign Princes, whoſe Subjects we are not, indeed it is not ſo great an Evil to ſpeak ill of them as of our own. But yet it is no inconſiderable Sin, 1. Becauſe we are to ſpeak ill of no Man. 2. Becauſe all Princes in general bear the viſible Marks of the divine Authority, and *are ordained of GOD*, as S. *Paul* ſays.

3. What we have ſaid of Princes and ſovereign Magiſtrates, regards alſo their Viceroys and Governours, which they ſend into their Provinces, their Miniſters of State and their Officers, for they truly are our Superiours. Therefore the Apoſtle of the Gentiles joins them with Principalities and Powers whom we ought to obey and pray to GOD for. If Subjects are oppreſſed, Satyrs againſt their oppreſſors are not like to relieve them very much.

Tit. 3, 1. 1 Tim 2. 1, 2.

4. If Detraction and ſpeaking ill of Sovereigns deſerves to be condemned, no leſs condemnable in Sovereigns is it to ſpeak ill of their Subjects. Exalted as in Fact they are by their Grandeur, they ought

ought to leave so mean and base a Vice to others. It is also a great Weakness in them to backbite their Subjects, or others whom they can chastise so many other ways, if they have done what deserves their Indignation. Besides that their Detraction is more destructive than that of particular Persons; every one thinking it an honour to mind them, and almost a Duty to imitate Princes and other great Men. SECT. V

The Emperor *Julian*, called the Apostate, was certainly very much in the wrong, to write a Satyr against his Subjects of *Antioch*, as we are informed he did, by *Theodoret* in the third Book of his *Church History*, Chap. 28.

Circumstance Fifth.

For a Minister to detract is a much greater Sin than for another Man, and especially if he speak ill of other Ministers, or of his own Flock.

Is it not a fearful Thing, that they who peculiarly ought to serve the Lord, should thus violate his most holy Laws? What a Crime is it, that they whose Office it is to bless the People, should busy themselves about Things that are quite the Reverse! Numb. 6. 23.

1. They Sin more than others, because they ought to know better, and can't so easily excuse themselves of their Ignorance

SECT. V. in this Matter. 2. With regard to GOD who has, as it were, committed to them his Laws, which they hereby violate. 3. With Reference to their Neighbours, who are more scandalized by their Detractions than by those of other sinful Men. People are hereby induced to think, either that Religion it self is a meer Fable, seeing the Teachers and Expositors of it, do thus trample it under Foot: Or that it is impossible to practice it, since they who ought to be most godly, do not practice it's Ordinances, but on the contrary, do by Detraction violate them.

And as every Thing in the Church ought to be pure, even to the very Wives of those who help to govern it, S. *Paul* requires, that the Wives of Deacons be not Slanderers. 1 Tim. 3 11.

What I say with regard to Pastors who fall into this Sin, I don't say it so much to censure their Conduct, which I leave to GOD's Judgment, as to warn the People, that they shou'd not follow the Example of a Thing so odious in those whom they wou'd imitate.

2. It is a very crying Sin for a People to speak ill of Ministers, especially of their own. Let us consider, that notwithstanding all their Defects, they are in sacred Writ, called, *Ambassadors for Christ*; 2 Cor. 5 20 1 Cor. 3 5. *Angels* or *Messengers of* GOD, whom

in

in some sense, they represent upon Earth. Let us remember, that they are spiritual Fathers, who give Milk to the Weak, and strong Meat to those who are more advanced; and who, according to St. *Paul*'s Expression, beget Men for our Lord Jesus Christ, and endeavour to bring them to a Life as far above this, as Eternity is beyond a short space of Time; to infinite Pleasures, from Troubles and Miseries. In a Word, Let us be aware of the Correction which *Israel* received, when they rose up against *Aaron* the high Priest. SECT. V. 1 Cor. 4. 15. Numb. 16.

Circumstance Sixth.

To backbite Benefactors is adding to Detraction, the Sin of Ingratitude, which is certainly a very great Sin. Publicans and Sinners, says our Lord, do good to those who do them good. Ungrateful Persons therefore who hurt their Benefactors are worse than Sinners; that is, their Sin is greater than that of ordinary Sinners. This Vice, and especially in the Subject we are treating of, is so directly contrary to the Principles of natural Equity, that it may justly be called a Sin *against Nature*. Nay, it is so cry'd down in the World, that it is needless to spend much Time in shewing all the Horror of it. Mat. 5. 46.

SECT. V. The ungrateful Wretch, who says, that no Thanks are due to those who have obliged him, does much less deserve that they shou'd do him any Service.

Circumstance Seventh.

When a Servant speaks ill of his Master it is also more criminal than if another had done it, or than if he had spoken ill of some other Person: Because Masters have a sort
Col. 3. 22. of Sovereignty over their Servants, and because *S. Paul* so expressly requires these latter to obey and respect them.

On the other hand, the Tenderness which Masters ought to have for their whole Family (of whose Number are Servants) should hinder them from detracting, unless in Cases of Necessity, where they cannot dispense with it without Lying, or com-
Col. 4. 1. mitting some other Sin.

Circumstance Eighth.

To speak ill of those we call Friends, to discover their Secrets and Imperfections, is Hypocrisy, Infidelity and Treason joined to Detraction. What! Because they err'd in trusting to us as Friends, the Knowledge of some secret Imperfection, shall we be so wicked, as to discover & publish it abroad, as the infamous *Dalilah* did *Sampson*'s Secret!

cret! Shou'd any Difference arise between those who have once professed Friendship, let them follow the Advice of *Solomon*, *Debate the Matter with thy Neighbour, and discover not a Secret to another.* To act otherwise, is to contemn the sacred Laws of Friendship, which don't allow us to do an Injury to our former Friends, even after just Grounds of Discontent. It shou'd be our Care to chuse Friends, whose Probity and Virtue we have been formerly acquainted with; and when Friendship is once confirmed, we must bear with mutual Defects. SECT. V.

And truly, they who thus betray Persons with whom they have been or are straitly linked, seem to condemn themselves by their own Practice. Here we may apply the Words of *S. Chrysostom.* "When they "tell a Secret, they intreat, they conjure "him that hears them, not to relate it to "any one, thereby declaring that they "have committed a Thing worthy of re-"proof. For if you beg him not to tell "it to another, you ought rather to have "refrained telling him first. Your Secret "was sure with you; after you have re-"vealed it, you are solicitous for it's Con-"servation. Wou'd you not have it di-"vulged, then tell it not to another, but "after that you have committed the keep-"ing of your Secret to him, your Warn-

SECT. V. "ing and Conjuring him to keep it, is "but unprofitable and superfluous".

Every one looks with a kind of Horror on the Perfidy of *Sabinus*'s false Friend, who by his Wiles engaged him to talk a little too freely of the Emperor *Tiberius*, and so by being an Accomplice in his Crime, and then a Betrayer of him, caused him to be condemned to Death.

Tacitus his Annals Lib, 4.

Circumstance Ninth.

To backbite those with whom we are engaged by Civil Bonds, as Country-Men and Neighbours; or by Religious Tyes, as those who profess the same Faith with us, is an aggravating Circumstance of Detraction. For if, according to the Apostle we are to do good to all Men, but especially to the Household of Faith, in Opposition hereto, but in the same sense, we are to do Evil to no Man, especially not to the Household of Faith.

Gal, 6. 10.

Circumstance Tenth.

To Detract from those who are in Affliction or Misery of what sort soever it be, whether in Poverty or Sickness, is a very great Evil. Yet there is nothing more frequent than this. If a Man falls into Poverty, we immediately cry, *he was a Fool,*

Fool, that took no Care of his Buſineſs; an ambitious Fellow, that wou'd fly without Wings. If a Perſon happen to be miſerable, we ſay, *He has brought his Misfortune on himſelf.* Suppoſe ſuch Talk, tho' often raſh, were true, and that GOD afflicted him for his Sins, is it not ſtill ever true, That to aggravate the Misfortune of the Miſerable is very great Barbarity? If it be GOD that chaſtiſes thoſe Wretches, are not we much in the wrong thus to encroach on the ſovereign Rights of the Lord. Suppoſe it be their own Sins by which, as well as for which they are puniſhed, muſt we be the Executors of Sin? Is not this to have Communion with Sin, to do it's Office, even to cauſe Affliction to Sinners, as it does, tho' in a different way? Is it not true, That ſhould GOD puniſh our *Pride*, as he has the Faults of thoſe whom we backbite and deride, That we might at leaſt expect as great Puniſhments as theirs? Moreover, 'Tis not always for their Sins that GOD puniſhes Men: 'tis ſometimes in Love and Wiſdom. 'Tis a Preſervative from falling or refalling into Sin, as a Phyſician will let a Man Blood, or adminiſter Phyſick to him, to prevent a Sickneſs or cure it. SECT. V.

I have juſt now mention'd *Pride*, which merits ſevere Chaſtiſement; and this I did chiefly, becauſe that it is from Pride, that we ordinarily inſult the Calamities of others,

SECT. V. being ready to make Men think, That seeing GOD spares us, certainly we must be better than those we talk of; or that it is from our great Prudence and Sobriety, That we are preserved from Poverty and Maladies. *David* reckons the Persecutors of the Afflicted among the very worst of Men, when he says, *They persecute him whom thou hast smitten, and they talk o*
Psa 69.26. *the Grief of those whom thou hast wounded.*

ARTICLE *II.*

Of the aggravating Circumstances, with regard to Detractors in particular.

Circumstance First.

ONE Circumstance which comes very near the last we mentioned and which considerably aggravates Detraction is, to be the Author and first Discoverer of it; to reveal a Fault which no one before knew of; among all People, at all Times, in all sorts of Crimes, they who are the Authors of 'em are looked upon as most blameable and consequently most rigorously treated. The Leaders of a Rebellion for Example, as they are the most distinguished in the Sedition, are most distinguished in

in the Torments inflicted on the Rebels, when taken. The Thing is the very ſame here. He that firſt publiſhes a Sin, ought to be regarded as more criminal than thoſe, who come after and relate what he had already ſaid. The Reaſon hereof is, that he is the Cauſe of all that ſhall be ſpread abroad after him and according to his Example, to the Prejudice of his Neighbour; and in general, of all the pernicious Effects which accompany Detraction. And let us not ſay, that we have no particular Tye to the Perſon whom we defame, to hinder our ſo doing. The general Tye we have to all Men, as Children of the ſame heavenly & earthly Father, is a ſufficient Reaſon for our not diſhonouring them, and eſpecially for our not being the firſt in the Undertaking. SECT. V.

Circumſtance Second.

To name thoſe from whom we had the Evil Reports which hurt our Neighbour, is a Degree of Aggravation added to bare Detraction. For hereby we doubly detract; firſt from him who is the Object of the Detraction; and ſecondly, from him, by whom we heard the News, who is tacitly accuſed of being a Detractor, when we ſay, 'twas he who firſt acquainted us with the Fault.

ARTICLE

ARTICLE *III.*

Of the aggravating Circumstances with regard to the Manner of Detraction.

Circumstance First.

IF rash Judgments are the Sources of Detraction, they are also of the Ways made use of to spread it abroad. An Infinite Number of Detractions are only such Judgments upon the Conduct of others. This rashness in Judgments is forbidden in Scripture, not only in general as it condemns Detraction, but in particular, when it is said, *Judge not, that ye be not judged.* I shan't here enter into the Common Place of rash Judgments. I shall only say, as what I can't here dispense with that altho' they be true, yet those who make and speak them, are still culpable, since this Rashness is condemned by GOD's Law. And if they be false, they then form not only a Detraction, but even a Calumny. In fine, if we give our Judgments to others not as certain, but as probable; not as grounded upon just Reasons, but on Suspicions, This is to do a great Injustice to our Neighbour. 'Tis greatly to wrong him, to form Judgments grounded on Suspicions, and to destroy

destroy his Reputation by Probabilities. For altho' we don't say they are very certain, yet as the World now goes, chusing to censure, and ready to believe Evil, they, to whom we communicate these rash Judgments, take a Pleasure in believing them well grounded and certain, and relating them as such, to other Persons. SECT.

Circumstance Second.

Another Degree of Sin in Detraction is to couch it in writing. The Reason hereof is evident; for it has then more evil Effects. Words vanish & may be forgotten; but Writings remain and may refresh the Memory of Faults which we had forgotten. Words likewise extend but to a small Distance, whereas Writings may go much farther and reach to the End of the World.

O what a strange and terrible Sort of Weapon is Detraction, which kills at than a thousand Leagues Distance!

Add to this, That there appears more of a premeditated Design in this sort of Detraction; and that we have more Time to think upon what we are about to do; which doubtless Augments the Blackness of the Crime.

ARTICLE

SECT. V.

ARTICLE IV.

Of the Circumstances which aggravate Detraction with regard to the Vices and Sins we publish.

A First Circumstance.

THE holy Scripture looks upon it as a very great Sin to backbite and deride a Person on Account of his bodily Defects. Therefore it formally forbids *Cursing the Deaf*; and says, *Thou shalt not put a stumbling Block before the blind, and Curse the Dumb, but thou shalt fear the Lord thy God.* To rail at and deride Persons on Account of bodily Infirmities, to which they did not contribute, is to deride their Creator who made them so. 'Tis moreover a manifest Injustice and Folly; since, far from being the Cause of these Defects, they wish with all their Soul to be free from them, and were it in their Power, they would willingly get rid of them. And we may as justly accuse a deaf Man of having heard Conspiracies against the State without declaring 'em, as to rail at and find fault with his Defects of Nature.

Lev. 19. 14.

We

We might enlarge here upon what we juſt mentioned under the firſt Section, where 'twas ſaid that we ſpeak ill of many on Account of their Birth; or what regards the Novelty of their Race, and meanneſs of their Origin, or that they owe their Birth to ſome Crime, or that their Anceſtors committed ſome Fault which diſhonours the Family. In general, we may ſay, that it is a great Injuſtice to Perſons to deride and inſult 'em for things in which they had no hand, and for which they are not culpable; to turn their Miſery into a Crime, and hurt them for what they are entirely innocent of, as well as to injure Perſons becauſe of bodily Infirmities which we have juſt now mentioned. SECT. V.

Is it then a Crime, an unpardonable Crime, and is it ſuch a mighty unhappineſs, that a Man can't reckon up a long Race of Anceſtors? To judge hereof, let us conſider, that the Eſteem we have for the Antiquity of an Houſe is but the Effect of Men's Humour, who in other Things prefer what is new: Let us conſider, that thoſe Families which are now ancient were once new, and that new ones may become ancient: And let us remark that all are the Children of *Adam*, and *Noah* the Reſtorer of a loſt World.

As to Illegitimates, We ſhould conſider, That GOD declares, Every one ſhall bear his

SECT. V. his own Iniquity, and so they cannot, and ought not to bear the Crime of their Parents. He also declares, that 'tis the Soul which sinneth, which shall die, and that the Child shall not bear the Father's Sin. Let us observe, that GOD caused the Children of rebellious Parents, who died in the Desart, to inherit the Land of Promise. Why then should we make the Children of the Wicked bear the Punishment which GOD does not inflict on them? at least when they don't follow their Father's Footsteps, why should we impute a Crime to them, which the Lord does not impute? Do we not on the contrary know, That GOD made use of *Jepthah*, (who was the Son of a Concubine,) to deliver his People *Israel* from their Foes, by the Hand of that valiant and wise Judge and General.

Ezek. ch. 18.

Judges ch. 12.

We speak evil of Illegitimates, either when they are in Poverty and Misery, or else when they have, by GOD's Blessing and their own Industry arrived at some elevated Rank. If it be in the first Case, it is great Inhumanity to add to the Misery of their Poverty, the Shame and Dishonour, which the World impute to such a Birth. And if they are in a flourishing Condition, if GOD has blessed them, and raised them why shou'd we debase them, and if their own Wit has rais'd them to this high Station, they are so much the more Praise-

Worthy

Worthy, (far from meriting Contempt,) in that they have rais'd themſelves without the Help of others. What we have ſaid, may alſo be applied to thoſe, whoſe Parents have committed Faults that have been puniſhed by the Magiſtrate, or which altho' not puniſhed, do yet diſhonour their Houſe. SECT. V.

Moreover what has been ſaid of the Unhappineſs of Birth, and the Infirmities of the Body, may alſo extend to the involuntary Defects of the Mind. To detract from a Perſon becauſe GOD has not allowed him the Gift of Memory, to deride involutary Ignorance and invincible Stupidity, would certainly be a great Aggravation of Detraction, for the Reaſons already alledged, and becauſe in this they are very innocent.

Perhaps ſome may ſay, if it be ſo, then we do no wrong to a Man's Reputation, by ſpeaking of the Defects either of Body or Mind, becauſe none look upon them as Faults or Crimes of their own, and conſequently, injure them neither in Honour or Fortune. I Anſwer, That yet many Times it happens quite otherwiſe: They who have thoſe Infirmities, are all their Days the Scoff and Jeſt of others; and the World attach a kind of Infamy hereto. Yea many Times, Thoſe Blemiſhes in a Man's Birth hinder his Advancement; and ſo to avoid all this, the beſt Way is not to

mention

Sect. V. mention them, and the worst way is to deride them. Far then be from us, those Persons who can never speak of another without mentioning his Defects and Failings. And let those, who by their own Vertue and Piety have rais'd themselves high, be as much above their Deriders, as these are elevated above them in external Advantages.

Circumstance Second.

A Man shews himself extremely backbiting, when he divulges the Sins whereinto his Neighbours have fallen, being as it were forced into them; thro' the Violence of Persecution or being in danger of the Loss of Life, or when in short, Temptations have been over violent. Since these Circumstances do in some Measure extenuate the Sin before GOD, we all ought to have a respect hereto, and to consider that such Persons deserve rather our Compassion than Censure. Yea it is a Detraction mixed with Calumny, to represent these Sins in all the Horror they wou'd have, were they not accompanied with Circumstances which make them less. In short every Circumstance that lessens the Fault of the Doer, aggravates the Sin of the Publisher.

Circumstance

Circumstance the Third. SECT. V

'Tis an enhancing of Sin to mention Faults of which Persons have repented. Who would have reproached St. *Peter* for his Cowardise after the Tears it had drawn forth from him? Or *David* for his Adultery and Pride, after his Humiliation and Groans? Or St. *Austin* for his Debaucheries, after his extraordinary Repentance? How injurious would it be at the same time we are proclaiming their Failings, should we not set forth their Vertue, and shew that their Conversion had more Greatness and Sanctity, than their Fall had Meanness and Sin? To do otherwise, would be acting directly contrary to GOD, who says, "That if *the Wicked will turn from all his Sins that he has committed and keep all my Statutes, all his Transgressions that he hath committed, they shall not be mentioned unto him.* Ezek. 18, 21, 22.

Circumstance the Fourth.

What most enhances the Dishonour and Infamy of our Neighbour, greatly aggravates the Sin of Detraction. And as the Vices and Passions of the Heart do more injury to his Reputation than the Defects of the Mind, it follows, that to speak of the former is the greater Sin. Among the

SECT. V. Vices of the Heart, I reckon all those Sins
Gal. 5. 19. which *S. Paul* calls *the Fruits of the Flesh*; and all those Crimes of the Heathen, mentioned in many Places of his Writings, and also those which are to be and now are so common in these last Ages, according to his Predictions.

'Tis true we are with Grief to confess that many Persons glory in the greatest Crimes, and that the more criminal Men are, the more they are applauded instead of being contemned. But notwithstanding, 'Tis only by those Persons, who are engaged in the same Crimes and the like Libertinism. As for others, and the more sober Part of mankind, they do detest in general, at least in others, all Sorts of Crimes. And they who plunge themselves thereinto, lose their Reputation with their Innocence; more or less according to the Degree of their Corruption.

Circumstance the Fifth.

'Tis an Aggravation of Detraction when we mention Things, whereof not only the Doing is forbid, but also the very Recital, yea tho' it could be without Detraction. Such are the Debaucheries and Impurities, which *S. Paul* forbids us to speak of.
Chap. 3. 9. *Let no filthy Communication*, (says he to the *Colossians*,) *proceed out of your Mouth.*

Let

Let it not be ſaid that the Apoſtle condemns only ſuch laſcivious Diſcourſe as we our ſelves are Authors of, and not ſuch as we relate after others. Two Reaſons prove the contrary. 1. That he ſpeaks in General and without Reſtriction, and we ſee nothing in his Way of arguing that might reſtrain it. 2. That on the contrary, his own Terms ſhew that we ought to underſtand it, as well of the Relaters as the Author of filthy Communications. And truly, Is not a Diſcourſe as filthy and diſhoneſt in the Mouth of One as in that of Another? Thus tis a Sin even to relate ſuch Diſcourſe, and doubly ſo, if it be with a Deſign of hurting thoſe whoſe impure Words or Actions we rehearſe. SECT. V.

ARTICLE V.

Time and Place may aggravate the Horror of Detraction.

FOR Inſtance, To detract in the Church and in Time of Divine Service: A Time and a Place, wherein far from being permitted to detract, we ought not even to ſpeak of Things indifferent: but wherein we ought to edify one another by good Works, and not injure one another. Ne-

SECT. V. vertheleſs, (O the Wickedneſs,) we ſee Perſons who ſeem to come to theſe ſacred Places, only to examine curouſly, and malignantly all that ſhall be ſaid or done! Ready to cenſure all that the Preacher ſays, they whiſper to others the critical Remarks they make upon his Diſcourſes, and vilify all thoſe which are not faſhioned according to their own Fancy, and on Account of a Thouſand other Things. In a Word, I ſay that many of the Ways of Detraction, which we have related and many of it's Sources which compoſe the Third Section, and in General, the Malice of Heart, &c. &c. which contribute to aggravate other Sins, have the ſame Effect upon that we are now arguing againſt.

Particularly, Beſide the Circumſtances ſpoken of in this Section, there are Three others which are very pernicious; 1. That hereby we offend both GOD and our Neighbour, which is a double Crime. 2. That we are not ignorant that Detraction is a Sin againſt Charity. Let a Man repreſent it ever ſo little and trifling, ſtill he knows it to be a Sin, and this Knowledge ſerves to make it the greater; Faults committed by Ignorance being more excuſable. 3. That we commit this Sin from very ſmall Motives, yea from very evil Motives, as Self-Love, Covetouſneſs, &c.

The Uſes *of this Section.* SECT. V.

WE have endeavour'd to remark thoſe Things which make Detraction moſt enormous. There are ſo many Things which contribute hereto, (as we may ſee,) That it is very difficult that this Sin ſhou'd not be accompanyed with ſome of theſe deadly Circumſtances, and perhaps with many of 'em. It is then very difficult but that a Detractor ſins doubly, which ſhould greatly induce us to hate this Vice. Perhaps among the Degrees we have mentioned, there are ſtill others, and among each we may meet with ſomething that we have ſaid nothing about: Perhaps, I ſay, The Subject who backbites his Sovereign, may ſin leſs than the Child who ſpeaks ill of his Father: Altho' it may be thus, yet there is no ſcruple to be made but that they both ſin greatly; and all the Difference that will be found, ſhall be, that the one will be plunged deeper into Hell than the other. But where's the Man who wou'd try this Difference? Who does not know that the leaſt Torments of this Abyſs are yet infinite Torments at leaſt in Duration? That the Torments are the Flames of a Lake of Fire and Brimſtone, accompanied with the Gnawings of a Worm that never ceaſes, never dyes.

Mat. 25 41. Mark 9 48.

Sect. V. The same may be said in general of all the Degrees of this Sin, and even of the Sin it self considered without its aggravating Circumstances. Suppose we should avoid these Circumstances, yet what cou'd we expect from bare Detraction, but that we should not be so violently tormented as those who speak ill of Parents, Ministers, &c. But after all, we shall be forever tormented with the Pains of Fire; the Torment whereof is not middling or tolerable. Let us then shun not only what encreases both the Sin and the Punishment, but let us avoid the Sin, tho' in it self not so great, that so we may be entirely saved from the Torments prepared for it. Torments as certain as they are extream in the pain, Eternal in the duration.

What we have said in this Section does not excuse little Sins. There will be always reasons sufficient to combat them, tho' there be more against greater Sins. A Criminal suffers Death, tho' there be but one Head of Accusation against him which deserves Death, altho' he wou'd have been more blameable, had he amass'd a great Number.

SECT.

SECTION VI.

Of the Effects of Detraction.

IF Detraction be a Sin in its Sources and in it self, it is not less so, and therefore not less diligently to be shun'd, in its hateful and perniciousEffects. That we may take a distinct View of those Effects, we shall range them under particular and distinct Heads.

The first shall shew its direful Effects, with respect to Detractors while in this World. The Second, with respect to the Persons spoken ill of. The Third, with regard to those who hear the Detraction. The Fourth, with regard to the State. The Fifth, with reference to Religion. The Last, with respect to the Punishment which GOD will inflict on Detractors in the other World.

ARTICLE *I.*

Of the Effects of Detraction as referring to Detractors while in this World.

I.

IN this first Respect it is exceeding detrimental to these Persons. For 1. It

SECT. VI. spoils their Judgment. It is a general Rule and beyond Exception that we ought to form our Mind, and especially our Judgment upon good Models, and strongly impress on our Memories the most judicious Tho'ts of others. By a like Maxim, they who have continually before their Eyes evil Objects, wicked Examples, and who take a Pleasure in entertaining them, must needs meet with a contrary Effect. How then can Detraction but spoil the Mind, seeing for its Objects and Subjects it has the false Steps, Imprudences and false Reasoning of our Neighbour? 2. The same may be said with Reference to the Heart, which it equally corrupts, when it has other Men's Vices for its Object. Perhaps some will say, that when we speak ill of the Defects of the Mind or the Vices and Passions of the Heart of a Man, it is with a Design rather to disapprove and avoid them, than to follow and practice them. But to this I answer, 1. That many condemn in others what they practice themselves. The World is full of such like Examples. 2. We do certainly many Times speak of what we love. 3. We are very ready to act what we frequently think and talk of. The Reason is, because these tho'ts must needs leave some evil Impressions on the Heart, as the Handling of Lead leave a Blackness on the Fingers. 4. The most

most effectual Way to avoid Sin, is to keep it at a distance even from our very Tho'ts. We know there are no Sins but what we may surmount by Flight. If Example makes us wander from our Duty so frequently, how much more will it do thus, when we take Care to entertain it, and meditate in our Tho'ts upon it. SECT. VI

II.

Detraction extreamly hurts our own Reputation. If those before whom Persons detract, do in the least perceive that it is Pride which engages them therein, they will conceive Scorn & even Hatred against the Detractors: Because Pride is as insupportable to those who discover it, as it is dear to those who are possessed by it without knowing it. So that altho' the vanity of others may do no harm, yet Pride is sufficient to displease, and to make the Proud contemptible. And from whatever other Passion Detraction arises, he that relates it brings on himself the infamous Character of a Passionate Man. If it be Levity, desire of Talking, or Idleness, he will lie under the title of a light, talkative, idle Fellow. If we consider the hurt Detractors do their own Reputation, when they wou'd debase that of others, and the Train of Evils they bring on themselves, and how often and strongly their Conduct is condemned in the Law of GOD, they de-

serve

Sect. VI serve the Name of imprudent, unwise and irreligious Persons. In general, they pass for wicked and destructive Persons, Characters very proper for the acquiring an ill Name. Such as highly applaud them, do in the Bottom of their Souls detest and deride them. He who laughs at the Relation, inwardly laughs and mocks at the Relator. He despises and hates him, because he is not ignorant that in his Absence he wou'd say the same or like Things of him, which he has heard spoken at anothers Cost. After having been a Witness to a Conversation where no one was spared, can he perswade himself, that they will spare him in another, and that others will not hear of him what he has heard of his Neighbour? So that the Detractor is blamed and hated by every Body. *The Discourse of Foolishness is Sin, and the Scorner is an Abomination to Men*, says *Solomon*.

Prov. 24 9.

The Follies and Weaknesses which Detractors discover, may justly entitle 'em to an ill Name. What is there more ridiculous than the Man, who to raise his own Reputation will deny his Neighbour's good Character which is a shade upon his? Suppose he shou'd overthrow his Neighbour's Reputation, wou'd his own be a whit the greater, better or more perfect? Just like the Man who having a Mind to be as high as a Tree, cuts it down, but is he who fell'd it, one Inch the higher? No-

Nothing is more ridiculous than to detract thro' ſpight: For in thus revenging my ſelf, do I in the leaſt repair the Injury my Enemy has done me? Have I bro't any Advantage to my own Affairs? No, by no means. SEC. VI

The *Comedian's* Practice is look'd upon as mean, infamous and unworthy a Man of Honour. Nevertheleſs what are Detractors but Comedians, who act their Neighbours on a hundred different Stages? The Profeſſion of a Buffoon is looked upon with the ſame Eye, and yet this is the Profeſſion of detracting Raillers, who make the Company laugh at another's Coſt. The Detractor's Trade then is as infamous as the Comedian's or Buffoon's Profeſſion. And thus they divert the World, as well at their own Damage, as at the Coſt of thoſe they derid.

III.

Not only are Detractors expoſed to the Loſs of their own Reputation, but alſo to the Hatred, and Reſentment of thoſe whom they have backbitten. From hence ariſe ſo many Enmities, Animoſities, Deſigns and Effects of Vengeance, Quarrels and even Murders and Aſſaſſinations. The Thing is evident, and I doubt not but many of my Readers have ſeen themſelves the Proofs and Examples of what I advance. At *Rome* in the Year 1702, Mr. *Ceccadoro* Secretary

tary of the Latin Tongue to the Pope was assassinated near his own Apartment in the Palace of the *Vatican*, and upon his Clothes was found a Billet in these Words; *Beware of talking concerning another Man's Reputation.*

Moreover, The holy Scripture is an assured Warrant hereof. St. *Paul* in the 3d Chapter of his Epistle to *Titus*, after having formally forbidden Detraction, immediately upon it adds, *That they be no Brawlers*: So that the Apostle having condemned Detraction in it self, condemns it also in and because of it's Effects; namely *Quarrels*. So in his 2d Epistle to the *Corinthians*, he places Quarrels, Debates and Tumults before and after Detraction, thereby intimating that these are it's infallible Sources and Effects. St. *James* compares Detraction to a Fire: And how does that act? It separates the Parties which it burns, it lessens them, and torments them if capable of feeling Pain, and by destroying what it preys upon, it destroys it self. All this agrees perfectly well with Detraction, which disunites and separates the Detractors from the Detracted, and the former extenuate the other's Virtues as much as possibly they can. Detraction does these last a very considerable Evil. In a Word, The first by destroying the others, destroy themselves, because those whom they have

Ver. 2.

Ch. 12. 20.

Ch. 3. 5.

offended

offended, fly to Revenge againſt thoſe who have ſpake ill of 'em, and the Effect of this Vengeance is at leaſt reciprocally to detract. He who tells all that comes into his Mouth, is oftentimes obliged to hear what he would not. Like the Fiſh who bites the Hook wherewith he is himſelf taken: And thus Men obſerve that Law of Retaliation, *Eye for Eye, and Tooth for Tooth.* SECT. VI. Exod. 21. 24.

St. *Peter* requires that Chriſtians *ſuffer not as Buſy-Bodies in other Men's Matters*; which teaches us, That Detractors by getting acquainted and medling unadviſedly in other Men's Matters, do bring themſelves into difficult Affairs. And beſides this, We find this Truth eſtabliſhed in an infinite Number of Places in holy Writ. *What Man is he that deſireth Life and loveth many Days that he may ſee Good? Keep thy Tongue from evil,* ſays *David. He that hath a perverſe Tongue falleth into miſchief, but whoſoever keepeth his Mouth and his Tongue keepeth his Soul from Troubles. A Whiſperer ſeparateth chief Friends. Caſt out the Scorner and Contention ſhall ceaſe; yea Strife and Reproach ſhall ceaſe,* ſays *Solomon. The Wicked is ſnared by the Tranſgreſſion of his Lips.* 1 Ep. ch. 4. Pſa. 34. 12, 13. Pro. 20. 31. Ch. 21. 23. Ch. 22. 10. Ch. 18, 7, 8.

'Tis no wonder Men are carried to all manner of Exceſſes in Words and Actions againſt

Sect. VI

against Detractors, since nothing gives us greater uneasiness than Contempt; so that nothing can trouble us more than Detraction which results therefrom, and causes those to be despised whose Faults we lay open; and nothing can afford us more Pleasure than to be revenged for this Contempt: Still further, Nothing offends more than injurious Truth, and a revengefull Spirit will be carried to the uttermost Extremities, rather than bear 'em.

If you accuse a Man as being of an haughty, fierce, revengeful and arrogant Spirit, Do you think that when he revenges himself on others, he has more regard for you? And won't be revenged for your Contempt? Will you say that your Power or your Enemy's Weakness won't permit him to execute his evil Designs upon you? But remember that the Wicked have ways enough to hurt, and that the least Enemies are always formidable. A Bramble, a Thistle, a Nettle appear very contemptible, yet touch them and they cause exquisite Pain. The Comparison is easily applied, and so I leave the Reader to do it.

There are also Persons who have more Courage than Wisdom and Religion, who would not stick to kill a Man that has spoken ill of 'em. Such are those who prefer Honour to Life, and upon this Principle, will readily take away the Life of another

another or risque their own, to get rid of their Shame in their Tomb, or to wash it away, as they fancy, in the Blood of their Enemies. As much as we hate Detractors for the Evil they have already done us, so much do we fear 'em, for the Evil they may do us hereafter. SECT. VI

Let us remark a few Things here as to the Causes of Detraction. Pride is very proper to raise Disputes and Contentions. So *Solomon* says, *Only by Pride cometh Contention.* Pro. 13. 10. As Pride drives a Man to detract, so thro' Pride the Persons reviled can't bear it. Hence arise Troubles, Injuries and sometimes what is worse. Both Parties being willing to sustain the Point of Honour, give mortal Wounds and will not yield, Moreover, as the Detractor is the Aggressor he usually suffers most. For Words he receives Blows, and like the Bee perishes with the Wounds he has made. Shou'd we by our Words injure a Person to his Face, wou'd he not daily follow us with Quarrels and perhaps with Duels?

It may even happen that if you rail more ingeniously than your Antagonist, (as there is Jealousy in all Trades) he whom you surpass, will be jealous of you & strive to hurt you, as is common with jealous Persons.

What still adds to the Misery of Detractors is, that they can't complain when they

are

SECT. VI are brought into such difficult Affairs; because they must look on themselves as the Causes of their Troubles. And truly, can they be ignorant that by their Detractions and Raileries they have offended People? Can they be ignorant, that offended Persons fly to Revenge? Can they flatter themselves that what they say against a Man behind him, will not be told him again? Are they not apparently exposed to all this every Time and as soon as they have published their Satirs and pronounced their Judgments? What can we conclude from hence, but that these Persons who thus expose themselves to the Loss of Reputation, do sin against the Commandment of *S. Paul*, who bids us *seek those Things which are of good Report*? That those who spoil their Wit and Judgment by their detracting humour, do not only smother, but even dissipate those Talents which GOD had trusted 'em withal for a quite different Use? And that consequently they will be treated with more Rigour than unprofitable Servants? That they who hereby corrupt their Hearts, do sin against all those Commandments which urge to strive after Perfection, and to encrease in Godliness, far from diminishing and extinguishing it? That they who bring Miseries on themselves by their own Detractions, are involved in the same Sin with Self-Murderers, except

Phil. 4 8.

except that they Sin only in Proportion to the Hurt bro't on themſelves; but if hereby they bring Death on themſelves, they are then Self-Murderers indeed? That by raiſing Quarrels between themſelves and thoſe whom by their Diſcourſe, they injure, they act contrary to the Precept of the Apoſtle *Paul*, who requires us *to be at Peace with all Men, as far as in our Power*; and to that of our Saviour, *to be harmleſs as Doves, and wiſe as Serpents*; nothing being more oppoſite to Wiſdom and Prudence, even humane Prudence, than the Conduct of thoſe we are ſpeaking of, ſince they expoſe themſelves to many Evils which it is Wiſdom to avoid: Which made *Solomon* ſay, *he that backbiteth is a Fool*; and elſewhere, *he that is void of Wiſdom deſpiſeth his Neighbour, but a Man of Underſtanding holdeth his Peace*

SECT. VI

Rom. 12, 18.

Mat. 10, 16.

Pro. 10, 18.

ARTICLE II

Of the Effects of Detraction with Regard to our Neighbours, and Firſt as to thoſe who are ſpoken ill of

'TIS certainly a great Injury to a Man to take away his Reputation,

Sect. VI. which is profitable and even necessary for him in most Circumstances of his Life. To Discover his Defects is to hurt him for Time past, present and to come. For Time past, because we nearly make the World judge, that all the Good he has formerly done was but the Effect of Hypocrisy; which takes away the Reputation acquired by Actions which perhaps were really good. For the present Time, because as soon as we think a Person vicious, we cease to esteem and do him good. In fine, all the good he does for the Time to come, will be ever suspected, and taken on the wrong side. We need but know Men, to be assured that this is their way.

The Evil we say of Persons may even return on their Relations, their Children and their Posterity, by a Kind of Reverberation or second Stroke, which is fatal to their Rise and Fortune.

Moreover, tho' a good Reputation were not of so high a Value as the greatest Part of the World imagine, 'tis sufficient that they from whom it is ravished, are perswaded 'tis a very great Advantage, to make them exceeding outragious at it's being blotted. 'Twould be needless to shew that all Mankind, look upon a good Reputation as a very exquisite and precious Good. To acquire or preserve it, Thousands do deprive themselves of all that is dearest

deareſt to 'em, and do things which naturally they have the greateſt Averſion to, and expoſe themſelves to the moſt evident and terrifying Dangers, yea, to an almoſt certain Death many Times. No Wonder then, that Men are ſo enraged againſt thoſe who injure and diſhonour them, and that they endeavour to be revenged therefor. SECT. VI.

A ſecond Injury we do our Neighbour is, that we make him hate thoſe who defame him, wiſh their Hurt, and procure it when able: Which are Things very oppoſite to Charity: But the Conduct of Detractors is not leſs ſo, ſince they are the Occaſions of theſe Sins, which Charity does not permit. So we put a ſtumbling Block in their Way.

Still farther, ſhould the Perſon of whom we ſpeak ill, be patient, good-natur'd and Chriſtian-like enough to Pardon the wrong we have done him; ſtill this don't excuſe the Detractor, ſince it is forbidden us to cauſe any hurt to our Brethren.

Moreover, who is certain, but that he may reſent the Wrong done and retain Deſires of Revenge, altho' they do not appear and break forth immediately.

What greater Injury can we do a Man, than infallibly to deſtroy his Reputation, to make him loſe his Innocence, to be at leaſt an occaſional Cauſe of his own Miſery in this and the future World? Do we not

SECT. VI diabolically tempt our Neighbour by engaging him in Crimes worthy of Hell? Is not this to be an Instrument of the Devil? Is it not to go beyond him in Wickedness, who in this Life hurts only the Soul, whereas Detractors destroy his temporal and spiritual Benefits.

ARTICLE *III.*

Detraction is hurtful to those of our Neighbours who hears us detract.

DEtraction is fatal not only to the Detractor and the Detracted, but to those also who hear others detract. And this several ways. As,

1. The Example we set before our Neighbour in Detraction, is oftentimes more than sufficient to engage him therein in like manner. 'Tis by Use, Custom and Example that the greatest part of Mankind suffer themselves to be led. Thus he who gives others a pernicious Example, is partly the Cause of those Sins which they thereby commit. And *Wo to him by whom the Offence cometh*! Luk. 17. 1

2. 'Tis farther fatal to Persons who are present, because Detractors do their utmost to engage them in Detraction. They will ask

ask their Advice or their Approbation; SECT. VI
call them to Witness for the Truth of what they say; use all their endeavours to make them also detract, that so as Accomplices therein, they may not reveal to him who has been talk'd against, what was said to his discredit: For how will they dare to accuse others, if those that are present were not partakers in the same Crime? Prudence would allow no such Thing.

3. Detraction is a destructive Sin as it furnishes the Auditors with a Subject and Matter for their Detractions elsewhere; by furnishing them with the Defects of others, of whom they were ignorant, they have afterward wherewith to censure their Conduct. This is not only a declaring War with our Neighbour, but a furnishing others with Arms to fight against him: Thus the Sin is double.

4. Detractors cause the Hearers of their ill Language, to despise and hate those who are spoken ill of before 'em, which is a Sin both in the Detractor and in those who hear him detract.

5. If these last are already corrupted, the Vices and Crimes of others, which they hear spoken of, encourage them, to persist in their own, being perswaded they are Sins which many Persons fall into, and therefore are but small: As if each one of those who do evil, retain'd with himself a part

Sect. VI of the Horror of the Sin, and ſo diminiſhed it, being thus divided into many Parts: But on the contrary it is communicated to an infinite Number of Perſons, without loſing any Thing of it's greatneſs and wickedneſs. On the other hand, Shame wou'd keep a Man to his Duty, if he ſaw himſelf the only wicked Perſon; but Men think there's no more Shame to be feared, when they have many Companions. In fine, As 'tis Example which leads Men into Sin, ſo 'tis Example which keeps 'em in it.

But if thoſe before whom we detract, be honeſt, ſober Perſons, 'tis much to be fear'd, that when they compare themſelves with thoſe we ſpeak ill of, they will take occaſion to brag and liſt themſelves above them, by a Pride natural to thoſe who think themſelves better than others.

6. The Crimes we relate, are like ſtumbling Blocks which cauſe the Auditors to fall into Sin. Vice has a peſtilential and communicative Air, which makes a deep Impreſſion on the Heart. Filthy Diſcourſe, and in general, all ſuch as diſcovers and makes Sin known, has the ſame Effect as ill Writings have. How many Perſons wou'd have been all their Life-Time ignorant of the way of committing a thouſand ſorts of Vices, had they not read or heard how others fell into them, and how ſome have refined on the common way of ſinning?

ning? Or let us suppose, That a Man learns nothing of those Sins, but was acquainted with 'em before; yet certainly, it is ever a very dangerous thing, to refresh the Memory anew, and cause it to think thereon again, since from Tho'ts we too commonly proceed to Deeds. SECT. V

Detractors do in particular cause this great Evil to those who hear them, that they kindle between those they talk'd of, and those who hear them, furious Enmities and long Quarrels, and thereby trouble the Repose of their Lives. This is excellently well express'd by the wise Man, *Where no Wood is, there the Fire goeth out; so where there is no Tale-bearer, the Strife ceaseth.* 'Tis clearly seen, That as Wood is the Matter for Fire, so Reports are the Matter of Quarrels, whereof Detractors are the Causes. And in another Place *Solomon* say, *The Words of Tale-bearers are as Wounds.* Prov. 26. 20.

ARTICLE *IV.*

Detraction is very fatal to any State and Society.

1. AFter having prov'd Detraction to be very fatal to particular Persons, it follows that it is deadly to a State; seeing a State is compos'd of the various Members which form it, and to whom Detraction is very hurtful.

SECT. VI

2. Historys both ancient and modern furnish us with sufficient Examples of Princes, who having spoken ill of others, have made them their Enemies, whereby their Kingdoms and Subjects have extremely suffer'd by these Wars. Beside foreign Wars, has not Detraction rais'd a thousand civil Tumults and Quarrels among Fellow-Citizens, so much the more pernicious as they were Members of the same Body, which thus rent each other.

3. When the Enemies of a State learn by means of their Spies, and these by means of Detractors, the Vices whereto the Princes of a Kingdom abandon themselves, they will certainly lay hold of their Weaknesses and make use of the Detractions which have been discovered to them.

4. They who backbite Princes and Magistrates do certainly a very great harm to their Country. As soon as the Faults of those who hold the Reins of Government, are made publick, and their Persons turned to ridicule, they are look'd upon as unworthy or uncapable of governing; People despise their Orders how just soever they be, and so bring Confusion into the State.

5. I can prove by the Words of a great Politician, and whose Witness is very worthy of belief, That Detraction is very pernicious to a Society and a State. *Scornful Men*, says *Solomon*, *bring a City into a Snare.*

Prov 29.8.

Snare. An Example taken from Hiſtory will ſet forth what *Solomon* ſays, and juſtify his Aſſertion. When *Agathocles* beſieged a City, ſome on the Walls derided & ſcoffed at him in theſe Terms, *Potter* *, *Where will you get Money to pay your Soldiers?* He anſwered, *When I ſhall have taken this City.* Having at length conquered the City, and ſold thoſe whom he had taken; *If*, ſaid he, *You again rail at me, I'll complain to your Maſters of you* †: Thus deriding them in his turn, ridiculing their Detraction, and Slavery, which was the Recompence thereof. SECT. VI

6. Detraction is certainly very hurtful to the Repoſe and Happineſs of a Society, and the Intereſt of a State: And thoſe Princes who have had at Heart a Concern for theſe Things, have ſeverely puniſh'd ſatyrical Perſons, drove away Accuſers and other Defamers, Examples whereof Hiſtory furniſhes us withal. Now if Detraction be pernicious to a State, then Detractors do ſin on this Account alſo, ſince we are inConſcience obliged to contribute our utmoſt for the Welfare of our own Country. On this Account therefore GOD ordered the *Jews* that were carried away

* This was his Father's Occupation.
† His Soldiers being now their Maſters.

to

SECT. VI to *Babylon*, to pray for the Prosperity of that Empire, where notwithstanding they were look'd upon as Prisoners of War, rather than Citizens, but which still was as it were a second own Country to them: This Reason likewise engaged young *David* in a dangerous Fight with the Enemy of his own Country.

Jer. 9. 7.

1. Sam. 17.

ARTICLE V.

Detraction is hurtful to the Church.

1. WE may make the same Remark here with reference to Pastors, that in the foregoing Article we did as to Princes and Magistrates, namely, That they who lay open their Defects, do thereby deprive their Auditors, their Flocks, of the Fruit which they might reap from their Discourses and Exhortations. When People are once convinced, that their Teachers lead an irregular Life, they soon disbelieve what they say, how true soever it be, and leave practising what they prescribe, tho' ever so just in it self. Thus little are a Flock obliged to those that shew them their Leaders Errors and Vices. Hence 'twas said of *Constantine* the great, that had he with his own Eyes seen a Bishop defiling his

Euseb. De Vita Const. Lib. 4.

his Neighbour's Bed, he would have co- SECT. VI
ver'd the enormous Crime with his own imperial Mantle, for fear any one ſhould be ſcandalized therewith.

2. Detractors hinder the Name of GOD from being glorified. *Let your good Works ſo ſhine before Men, that others may glorify your Father which is in Heaven*, ſaid our Lord. Whereby it appears that it is by the Sight of our good Works that others are induced to glorify GOD. How then will they glorify him, if they ſee nothing but evil Works, or at leaſt evil Words in Detractors! And on the other Hand, ſee nothing but Evil in thoſe whoſe Sins they diſcover! Matt. 5. 16.

3. As when one Member is honoured, all the Members have a part in the Honour, according to *S. Paul*, ſo when the Members are diſhonoured, the whole Body ſuffers; and Detractors do even the greateſt Outrage they are capable of, to Jeſus Chriſt the Head of the Church; ſince they injure his Religion, whoſe Beauty they tarniſh, whoſe Efficacy they ſtint, and whoſe Succeſs they retard. 1 Cor. 12, 26, 27.

(1.) With Regard to thoſe within the Church: Who can doubt for inſtance, that when the Leaders of Churches are quarrelling about Trifles, and Diſputes and Queſtions about Words, and do anathematize each other for meer Nothings, and compoſe

Volums

Sect. VI. Volums for the Ruin of each others Reputation. Who can doubt I ſay, that when the Shepherds are thus at variance, Wolves will not come and carry off the Sheep by open Violence, or by Ambuſh? And that while they ſpend their Time and Care about reciprocal and particular Quarrels, their Flocks will not be deprived of thoſe Inſtructions which are neceſſary to form them for ſolid Piety and the Practice of good Works? Moreover, theſe Diſputes among Divines, the Injuries which they heap on each other in their Books, ſerve to foment thoſe unhappy Diviſions with which we ſee the Church torn. Can theſe Men of ſuch contrary Sentiments pretend to gain any Thing to themſelves? No! There is nothing ſets them at a greater Diſtance from any Advantage than this. Detraction does alſo deſtroy that Harmony which there ought to be among all the Members of one and the ſame Body, as in the Church. It has been already ſhewn that nothing is more effectual than this Vice, to raiſe Diſunion and Diſcord, and nothing is more certain than that this Diſcord is pernicious to the Church, which, like the State, can ſubſiſt only by the Union of thoſe who compoſe it. The Compariſon of *S. Paul* is a Proof of this ſaying. He ſhews us that as a Body cannot ſubſiſt, if all the Members do not agree, ſo likewiſe the Church, which

he

he compares to a Body, cannot subsist, if Peace do not reign among its Members, and consequently if Detraction be not banished. And as Detraction is an Enemy to the Humane Body & the Body Politic, so it is also to the Body Ecclesiastic. SECT. VI.

(2.) With Reference to those without the Church: Detraction hinders the progress of Religion. Those Princes who are the Enemies of a Religion, do often take Occasion to persecute it, by Reason of the Detraction of its Professors. Thereby they perceive the Defects and Vices of its Members, and under Pretence of banishing Vice out of their Dominions, they banish the Religion it self. Under Pretence that the Discord is fatal to the State, they banish Religion which is by no means the Cause of it, since it forbids it.

They among Infidels or those of another Communion, hearing of the Faults of Persons who profess a Religion which they know only by report of others, are easily persuaded that all, or at least the greatest Part of those of that Religion, are vile Persons, whose Worship as well as Company, ought to be carefully avoided so that hereby the Name of GOD is blasphemed, according to *S. Paul's* Expression. Rom. 2. 24.

Detraction is also a very great hindrance to the Conversion of Infidels. I suppose here, that an Infidel has read or heard say,

That

SECT. VI. That GOD's Word works with might in those that believe, and is sharper than any two edged Sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of Soul and Spirit, and of the Joints and Marrow: Could such a one refrain reflecting thus? Certainly this Word is not true, since it does not convert it's Professors, of whom I hear a thousand Enormities told, that are not found among us.

1 Thes. 2. 13. Heb. 4. 12.

And when he denyed the Truth of this Word, He wou'd be little concern'd to Embrace the Religion founded upon it. Or had he a Mind to rank himself among Christians, wou'd he not say, "Where "shall I find them? These who call them-"selves such, do not follow the Rules and "Morals of their Christ, when they are "accusing each other. How can they "be perswaded, That he was a true Pro-"phet and the Son of GOD; since, ac-"cording to what they say of one ano-"ther, they do not obey his Laws and his "Gospel? They tell indeed of an Holy "Spirit, who is to lead them in Piety and "Virtue, but who can see this Holiness "in their Conduct; or who can see the "Image or Effects of this GOD, in their "Actions?" What Idea of the Christian Religion wou'd a Pagan have? When he heard those who exteriorly profess it, speak ill of each other so frequently as they do, wou'd he not think and say, *That their God had*

had commanded them to detract! A Tho't very likely to deter them from embracing it, Detraction being contrary even to that Law of Nature, engraven by GOD on the Hearts of all Men. What Idea cou'd a Pagan have of our holy Religion, when he knew it not in its Grounds, and such as it really is in it self, and was ignorant of the Author of it, but judged of it only by the Words and Actions of those who profess Subjection to this Religion and this Legislator! Detractors then do as far as they are able, crucify themselves afresh the Lord of Glory and put him to open Shame. Alas, had we the Interest of Religion at Heart, and were we concerned for GOD's Glory, should we not act in a quite different Manner! We should do as much for the Advantage of this Religion, as worldly Potentates do for their own Interests. They conceal their Losses and Disgraces as much as they can, that so they may not add too much Courage to their Enemies. Thus ought we to hide from the Enemies of our Religion, the Losses which it suffers every Time the Professors thereof wander from its Maxims. Thereby we shall hinder the Insults and Reproaches of its Enemies and rather gain them over to Christ. Being obliged as we are to pray for the Peace of *Jerusalem*, to seek the Prosperity of the Church, and the

SECT. VI

Heb. 6. 6.

Psal. 122. 6.

Sect. VI the Propagation of the Faith, Detractors do on this Hand sin very apparently, inasmuch as they know that the Church suffers greatly by their Detractions.

ARTICLE *VI.*

Of the sorrowful Effects of Detraction, with Regard to the next World.

THE last and most fatal Effect of Detraction is, That thereby Detractors lose Heaven, and plunge themselves into the Horrors of the bottomless Pit. This was proved in that Section where we spake of the greatness of this Sin, and 'twas there shewn, that they who commit this Sin shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven; and that, by Passages so formal and so numerous, that it is impossible to answer them by Reason, or to elude them by Artifice. How is it possible that Detractors should enter into Heaven, where all is Love! Of all Virtues this alone shall there subsist, but in an extent quite different from that of the most Charitable here below; for all other Vertues shall be changed into Love, to strengthen this. How then can Detractors enter into the Tabernacle of the Lord! Detractors, who so openly wound this

this heavenly Virtue, and do the Works of the Devil. This would be a bringing Hell into Heaven. 'Tis a Folly to think of uniting two Things, that are so incompatible. But is it not acting the Madman, to expose one's self to the Danger of Destruction, or rather to the inevitable Loss of the Riches and Glories of Paradise? SECT. VI

If we won't hide the Faults of our Neighbours, how can we hope that Jesus Christ will hide our Faults, when He shall judge the World in Righteousness? He will found his Arrests on our Practise or Omission of Love. To those whom he shall condemn He will say, *You did not cloath me when I was naked; go, ye cursed into everlasting Fire.* Will he not also say to Detractors, Far from hiding the Nakedness of my Members, you exposed them to the Eyes of all the World, by publishing their Imperfections. And as I look upon all done for or against them, as done for or against my self, you have injur'd me in their Persons, *Depart therefore, ye Cursed*, &c. Then shall be fully accomplished the Truth of *Solomon*'s Words, *GOD scorneth the Scorners, but giveth Grace to the lowly.* Matt. 25. Pro. 3. 34.

'Tis an important Consideration, That GOD will treat Detractors with the utmost Severity. There is not only this Evil in Detraction, that we shall render up an Account of what we have said, but that Chrysost. ad Pop. Ant. Hom. 3.

SECT. VI we shall thereby make our Sins more black as we shall deprive our selves of all manner of Excuse. For he that maliciously Publishes other Men's failings shall find no Pardon for his Excesses. And truly he shall be punished as Detractor, then as blameable for the evil Causes which made Men detract, and as the Author of all the pernicious Effects which Detraction produces; and because he hath been guilty of that very Sin, which he hath so much condemned in others.

After all this, Who can think that Detraction is not a Sin and a very great one? See how evil are its Sources, how hateful its Effects, sinning against GOD, against our Neighbour, and against the Detractors themselves; against the Law of Nature, that of *Moses* and that of the Gospel, and how severely it will be punished in the World to come! What a Cloud of Witnesses against Detractors!

Hel. 12, 1.

The Uses *of this Section.*

HItherto we have proved, that Detraction was a very great Sin in all Sorts of Ways. In particular in this Section we have shewn that its Effects are evil, which evidences that the Fountain, whence they derive

derive is evil in the higheſt Degree ; that the Loſs of Detractors, the Ruin of the Detracted, the Scandal of thoſe who hear the Detraction, the Ruin of the State, the Overthrow of Religion, and eternal Damnation are its fatal Conſequences. Some Reflections on what has been ſaid, may now conclude this Section. SECT. VI

It naturally follows from hence, that the juſt and moderate Love we ought to have for our ſelves, the Conſideration and Conſervation of our own deareſt Intereſts, either in this or in the other World, the tenderneſs we ſhould bear our own Country, the Love we ſhould have for our Brethren, and the Zeal wherewith we ſhould burn for GOD's Glory, ſhould make us ceaſe traducing any whoever they be. GOD as the Preſerver of that Order, he himſelf has eſtabliſhed in Society, as the Sovereign Judge and Lord of Conſciences, and as a good, a mighty and a wiſe Spouſe and Defender of his Church, will moſt certainly puniſh Detractors.

We look upon thoſe as at leaſt imprudent Perſons, who to have the Pleaſure of ſpeaking one good Word, or rather, bad Word, do expoſe themſelves to the Loſs of their beſt Friend. But ought we not to regard thoſe as Perſons deprived of Reaſon and Judgment, who for the Pleaſure of Detraction, loſe the beſt Friend they can have,

SECT. VI without whom they can't subsist a single Moment, and who when he becomes their Enemy, can plunge them into eternal Miseries; in a Word, GOD their Creator, their Preserver, their Master, their King, their Lawgiver and their All!

Are not these Motives, when single, powerful enough to render this Vice hateful to us? But, how great should their Power be with us, when our temporal Interest is found blended with our Interests to avoid the Torments reserved for Detractors in the Place of Devils? Think then that by Detracting, you become the Object of the Contempt and Hatred of GOD and Men. For tho' Men do sometimes love to hear Detraction, yet they don't love the Detractors for it. 'Tis with this as with Treason: We love the Treason & hate the Traitor.

The Quarrels which are raised by this Sin of Detraction, are equally certain, and equally pernicious to those who give way thereto; since they are destructive to themselves and hateful to GOD. But should it happen, that Detraction should not draw on the Detractor, the Hatred and Ill-Will of the Detracted, who are so good-natured as to forget his injurious Talk, this will not excuse the Detractor; for they who leave Vengeance to GOD, shall be avenged by him, according to the Wrong done them.

Moreover,

Moreover, It seldom happens, that they whose Honour has been sullied, and whose Credit has been diminished, do not Revenge themselves on the Injurious and make 'em Repent: and a Detractor never can be saved if he do not Repent and be Converted. On these two Regards, where all our Interests are united, let me use the Words of the Apostle, *If ye bite & devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another.* Gal. 5. 15. SECT. VI

SECTION VII.

Wherein some Doubts and Cases of Conscience are resolved; and 'tis shewn That all Detraction is not a Sin.

HAving shewn in general, That Detraction is a very great Sin, we shall at present shew, that this Rule has some Exceptions, and that in many Cases, Detraction is not a Sin, but is very lawful and even necessary.

1st general CASE.

It may be said in a general way, That all these Reasons which on some Occasions should hinder us from detracting, such as the divine Command, Charity, Justice, &c. do

SECT. VII.

do upon other Occasions oblige us to speak ill of our Neighbours. At first sight it appears obscure and contradictory, that the same Thing should be both just and unjust, charitable and contrary to Charity, conformable and incompatible with GOD's Law. Nevertheless, we hope to shew in the Sequel, that there is nothing impossible herein, when we consider Detraction under various Views.

2d CASE.

To speak ill of the dead is no Crime, provided the Ill we may say of them, does no harm to their Children and other People who are still living : On Condition tho' that we take Care before whom we talk, and that the Knowledge of their Sins do no harm to the State and to Religion, and that we speak not of them thro' Passion. Provided we observe these Precautions, I don't see what should hinder us from speaking of the Vices of the Dead, when Occasion presents. For,

1. When the Scripture requires us to speak Evil of no Man, it does not forbid us to speak of the Vices of the Dead, since these Words, no Man, apparently refer to the Living. What constitutes a Man is the Union of Soul and Body, and this Union ceases by Death, so that a dead Man is not properly a Person.

2. Were

2. Were it unlawful to ſpeak ill of the Dead, it would follow that no Hiſtories ought to be wrote; and many other Abſurdities. SECT. VII.

3. One principal Reaſon why the Scripture forbids Detraction is, becauſe it hurts the Perſon ſpoken of; but this Reaſon ceaſing by Death, which ſecures a Man from the worſt of Evils to which he is expoſed in this Life, nothing can hinder but that one may freely tell his Opinion concerning his paſt Conduct.

To the foregoing Sentiment it may be objected,

1. That a good Reputation is a Benefit to a Man even after his Death; but that Detraction raviſhes it from him and hurts that good Reputation which ſurvived him. I anſwer, that this goodName which many Perſons make ſo much of, and for which they will ſacrifice the true and ſolid Happineſs of Life, that ſo they may enjoy the Character of brave and worthy Perſons after Death, is but a Smoak, which oftentimes may do a Man good while alive, but which after Death can do him no good at all. Still further, as the Dead know no longer what is done under the Sun, ſo they have no more any good Thing here which belongs to them. Eccl. 9. 5.

2. Some may ſay, that at all Times & in all Places, the Tomb has been looked upon

SECT. VII.

as a sacred Place, and an Asylum, or Place of Refuge, which we might not touch, without a kind of Prophanation, and that therefore we ought not to rake the Dead out of the Tomb to bring them forth and detract from them.

I answer, this Argument looks something specious, but is not solid at all, as will appear if we will examine the Difference there is between raking up a Corpse and speaking ill of the Actions a Man did while his Soul and Body were united. The raking up of a Corpse is a spiteful, unnatural, unnessary Action, whereas the other may be done without Malice, and be sometimes necessary.

3d CASE.

Should any one demand whether or no it be lawful to speak ill of Nations in general, and whole Bodies, of what Profession soever they be; I answer, that doubtless it is lawful to speak in general, because among so great a Number there will certainly be found some honest Persons. If for Instance, I say that the Spaniards are haughty and lazy, I do not still intend but that there be humble & laborious Persons among 'em. *S. Paul* gives us an Example and Proof of what I advance. He did not stick to say that the Cretians or Candians *are always Liars, slow Bellies.* Yet still it must be remembred, that all which is

Tit. 1. 12.

lawful

lawful is not always proper and expedient; and that all Things do not edify. Thus if we have Reaſon to fear that any one will be offended at what we ſay ill of his Nation or Profeſſion in general, or that any other Inconvenience may ariſe therefrom, we ought to refrain ſpeaking. SECT. VII.

4th CASE.

As to Railleries, I ſay that all ſorts of Railleries at the Abſent are utterly forbidden; unleſs they come under the Exceptions in this Section.

As to Railleries at Perſons when preſent, I am not for condemning them under certain Precautions.

The firſt Precaution is, That it be not done too often; but only ſometimes for an innocent Diverſion, and not as a Buſineſs, according to the Practice of ſome. If GOD permits, that our Spirits as well as Bodies do ſometimes take a Looſe, yet we are to conſider, that this ought not to be the principal Buſineſs of our Lives, but rather an Help that we may return to our ſerious Employments with more Application, leſs Wearineſs, and conſequently, greater Succeſs.

A ſecond Precaution is, never to offend thoſe whom we rail at, never to touch them to the quick, and not jeſt with 'em, if they don't underſtand Jeſting, as we ſay. They muſt be aware that we are playing

and

SECT. VII.

and not fighting; that what we say is to cause Mirth, and not mutual Discontent.

The third Caution is, that when we repartee, we allow the other to reply in his turn; nevertheless it may be observed that those who most love to jeer others, are least willing to be jeered themselves. For Pride finds its Advantage in the former, and its Disadvantage in the latter.

A Fourth is, that we abstain from Raillery before, those who may afterward have an ill Opinion of those whose Defects we lay open by our Raillery.

A Fifth is, that we do not make Sport with others in time of publick Calamities, and when our Tears and Groans are required rather than Mirth.

The four last Conditions I have laid down, do shew how necessary the first is. And truly, as it is very rare, either that they whom we rail at are not offended, or that we our selves are not Angry when derided, or that there be not some Person who may have an ill Opinion of those who are jeer'd in his Presence, and Christians having Subjects enough to be more sorrowful than Merry, it is needful that our Railleries be but very rare.

5th CASE.

'Tis not only lawful, but profitable, for Persons to acquaint Parents of their Children's Vices, when they are so blind that they

they cannot see them, or when Excess of Love which they bear their Children, hinders 'em from seeing their Imperfections. Thus they were not in Fault who told *Eli* the high Priest, of the Debaucheries, Coveteousness and Profanity of his Children. The Reason why what we say is lawful, is, that it is not likely that Parents will make use of the Knowledge of the Sins of those to whom they are straitly tyed, to hurt them. On the contrary, 'tis apparent that they will use it to correct them for their good. Thus did holy *Eli*, who took Occasion from the Reports concerning his Sons, to give them wholsome Reproofs concerning their Conduct. 1 Sam. 2, 22, 23.

SECT. VII.

What has been here said concerning Parents and Children, may extend to Masters and Servants, and in a Word, to all those who may contribute to the Advantage and not to the Loss of those whose Irregularities they mention. Only we must take Care, how we speak; not to do it, that so we may exasperate the Parties; and not to speak with Revenge our selves, but always to have Love before our Eyes and in our Mouths.

6th CASE.

From the Principle now laid down, it follows, that 'tis no Crime to tell the Ministers and Guides of the Churches, the Faults of their People, that so by their Censures and Exhortations, they may cause

Sinners

SECT. VII.

Sinners to enter into the Path of Righteousness and Salvation. Thus we don't see that *S. Paul* was offended, because He was told of the incestuous Person at *Corinth.*

2 Cor. 5, 1.

7th CASE.

The Excommunication which *S. Paul* prescribes, and wou'd have practiced against scandalous Sinners is not a criminal Detraction, when it is made use of on the Occasions and for the Ends prescribed by the Apostles. The End thereof should be to shame the Sinner who is excommunicated, that so this shame may bring him to Repentance & a saving Conversion. It should also deter others, and to make them fear the same Punishment, if they live irregularly.

The Occasions whereon Excommunication is to be put into Practice are when the Crimes are well proved, certain, publick and great. Otherwise we are to make use of particular Censures, and if we act otherwise, Anathemas become true Detractions, since without Hope of any good, and without the Command of GOD, they may cause very great Evils.

8th CASE.

It may be enquired, Whether we can without detracting or sinning, tell the Magistrates concerning those sorts of Sinners who are punished by civil Laws, and the Laws of all Nations, such as Robbers, Murderers, &c.

To

SECT. VII.

To this I shall give some Light in the following Propositions,

1. We ought doubtless to tell the Truth before Judges, when call'd by and before them therefor, because otherwise we shall be guilty of that false Witness expresly forbidden by the divine Law.

2. 'Tis certainly our Duty to discover Criminals when the Laws command it, for in this Case we cannot disobey the civil Laws of Magistrates without sinning. Now since the Laws which forbid the Crime, do at the same Time require us to discover the Criminal if we know him, we ought to discover him in Obedience to our Superiours, and to prevent our sinning.

3. The Scripture says expresly, *thou shalt not suffer the Wicked among thy People.* Deut 21.22. We must then acquaint the Magistrate of them, that so he may banish them or put them to Death, or punish them some other Way.

4. Were it not lawful to bring Criminals to the Magistrate, he could never punish them, since otherwise he can have no Knowledge of 'em. So that Society wou'd be soon found in a woful Confusion. It is said very well on this Subject, that *Compassion for wicked Men is Cruelty to the Innocents*, who are continually suffering by their Violences, and whose Example is very pernicious, at least while they go unpunished;

whereas

SECT. VII.

whereas these Chastisements serve as a Bridle to those who intended to commit the like Things.

5. If we favour the Sinner, we injure him who was robbed or wounded, *&c.* We ought then to discover him, that so he may lay hold on the Robber, *&c.* and thereby may recover his Money, *&c.* Thus Charity requires us to discover the Villain either to the Person wrong'd, or to the Magistrate.

9th CASE.

Every one freely owns, that it is lawful to speak ill of a false Religion; that we may and even ought to refute Heresies; to speak against those who advance Propositions that are false and capable of damaging a civil Society and the Church; to discover Hereticks, that so they may be guarded against.

Hence it is, that it was never tho't ill to refute Hereticks, who have spread abroad the Poison of their Errors. All the World is obliged to defend the Cause of GOD, and this the Apostles did exactly practice. St. *Paul* says of *Hymeneus* and *Phyletus*, 2 Tim. 2. 17 that they had *made Ship-wrack of the Faith*; and according to the Opinion of some he argues against their Sentiments of the Resurrection in his 1st *Epist.* to the *Corinthians*, 15th *Chapter*. And he says of 2 Tim. 4. 10 *Demas*, that he had *forsaken him, having loved this present World*. In his Epistle

to

to the *Galatians* he relates the Difference he had had with St. *Peter*, and the Cauſe of this Difference, which was not advantageous to the latter. And verily St. *Paul* had good Reaſon for his ſo doing, becauſe it was to be fear'd that many for the Time to come as well as for the Time paſt, wou'd follow *Peter's* Diſſimulation: Now if he did not ſpare an Apoſtle when he went aſtray, how much leſs Regard ought we to have to ordinary Teachers, or rather to falſe Teachers, to walk in their wrong Steps? St. *Paul* made no Difficulty to ſpeak ill of one *Alexander* a *Copper-ſmith*, ordering *Timothy* to beware of him as of an evil Man. As formerly among the *Jews*, they cloathed leprous Perſons with old tatter'd Garments, that every one might know them by theſe Marks, and avoid them and their contagious Maladies, ſo we ought to ſet forth to view, thoſe who publiſh things contrary to the Word of GOD, and thus cauſe their Sentiments to be hated. And if among the Romans, they uſed to ty a Lock of Hay to the Horns of the *Ox* who was wont to gore, that ſo Perſons might keep out of his way, with much more Reaſon we ought to ſet a Mark upon thoſe, who by their impious Diſcourſes would impoſe upon the Publick, and lead them into Opinions more dangerous to the Soul, than a puſh of an Horn can be to the Body.

SECT. VII.

Gal. 2. 11, 12, & ſeq.

2 Tim. 4. 14.

Lev. 13 45.

We

SECT. VII.

We must only follow the Direction which *S. Austin* gives, not to dispute with Invectives but with Reasons; not to treat with the Person of our Adversary, but with the Thing & Question proposed. A Man's ill Life may'nt hinder his arguing very justly. In a Word, we must to our utmost, separate Hereticks from Heresies, condemning and hating their Heresies, but sparing their Persons.

10*th* *CASE.*

Some may ask, Whether a Man ought to suffer his Reputation to be torn to pieces; or be deprived of some other considerable good, rather than injure his Enemy's Reputation by speaking ill of him, if he can't otherways justify and clear himself? I answer, that when the Advantage is important, we ought to make no stick at discovering the Injustice and Knavery of those who would make us suffer, altho' the same should befall them. As will appear from these Reasons,

1. We are to love our Neighbour no more than we reasonably ought to love our selves. Now we should love our Neighbour more than our selves, if we let our Innocence suffer by the Crime of our Enemies.

2. The Apostles themselves did not fail to discover the ill Actions of others, to justify themselves. We have an Instance hereof in St. *John's* 3d Epist. Ver. 9, 10.

I wrote, says he, *unto the Church*; *but Diotrephes, who loveth to have the Pre-eminence among them, receiveth us not. Wherefore if I come, I will remember the Deeds which he doth, prating against us with malicious Words*; *and not content therewith, neither doth he himself receive the Brethren, and forbiddeth them that would, and casteth them out of the Church.*

SECT. VII.

For the well understanding what may be inferred from this Passage, we must remark, That this *Diotrephes* was alive at the Time of the Apostle's writing; that he declares that this Man committed evil Actions, that he assures us, that if he come, he will lay them open in their particulars, and this in order to justify himself, as is expressed in those Words, *Prating against us with malicious Words*. And it was to clear himself from those things that were imputed to him by these malicious Words, that he wou'd lay open their Falsity.

3. Justice it self requires us to defend our Rights, when we are unjustly accused. I should then sin against Justice, if I suffer'd my Innocence to be abused, for fear of discovering the Thievery and Injustice of those who rob me. Wou'd not this be punishing the Innocent instead of the Guilty; condemning the Righteous and justifying the Wicked? which, says *Solomon*, *is an Abomination to the Lord*. This Consideration

Prov. 17. 15.

Sect. VII.

ration shews, that it is not against Charity, to expose the Faults of another, rather than permit them to be unjustly charged to one's self. For since this wou'd be contrary to Justice, for the same Reason it wou'd not be contrary to Charity, which is never to take place till Justice be satisfied. We are ever to be just, but we are not always to be charitable to our Neighbour, at least when to satisfy this Charity, we must fail in our Justice and Charity to our selves. Moreover, Virtues are not opposite to each other; and here we may apply what St. *Paul* said on another Occasion, *The Spirits of the Prophets are subject to the Prophets*; Virtues are so subject to Virtues, that they wou'd be no longer Virtues, if there were any contradiction between them.

1 Cor. 14. 32.

4. Part of those Reasons we have alledged to prove the lawfulness of exposing a Criminal may be of Service here. I shan't here relate them, because you may call them to mind, or consider them in the Section where they are.

Having thus shewn that we may discover the Sins of another to justify our selves from any Crime laid to our Charge, or to re-demand what was unjustly taken from us, I desire that five Things may be heedfully observed in this Affair,

1. That we do our utmost that we may not be obliged to divulge the Faults of those who

who wou'd injure us, or actually have, injured us, by repreſenting to them the Injuſtice of their Proceedings, and by endeavouring to perſwade them to make us ſatisfaction. So Chriſt commands us in *Mat.* 18. 17. *ver.* and following. SECT. VII.

2. That we make known the Injuries done us, only to thoſe who ought to be informed of them, for our own juſtification and ſatisfaction, and not to others who can't ſerve us therein.

3. That we abſtain from ſpeaking of Injuries done us, if we think we can gain no good by ſo doing.

4. We muſt be on the Denſeſive, without attacking others, and muſt relate only what will ſerve our own Reputation or our other Advantages.

5. If the offence be but ſmall, we ought eaſily to pardon it. 'Tis the Character of a great, heroic and chriſtian-like Soul, to prefer the great Advantage of our Neighbour, to the leſſer Advantage of our own ſelves.

In all other Caſes it is lawful to defend one's ſelf juſtly againſt the Calumnies and Violences of others, provided we always follow the Rules of Benignity, Honeſty and Moderation. We ſhall become worſe than him we accuſe, if for the little Injury he has done us, we do him as great a one to ruin his Credit.

SECT. VII.

Some may perhaps ſay, that when St. *Paul* ſays, *Charity ſeeketh not it's own*, he does not allow us to preſerve our own Goods at the Loſs of thoſe of our Neighbour; ſo that thereby what I advance is overthrown. But this proves too much, and conſequently proves nothing. It wou'd truly follow from thence, that we ought to ſuffer Injuſtice to reign on the Earth; that we ought to have no Concern for our Honour; that we ought to introduce Vice into the World, and let the Wicked do what they pleaſe; Abſurdities far from the Sentiment of that Apoſtle or any other. St. *Paul* then here ſpeaks of a Charity which for our Neighbour's Advantage will cauſe us to ſacrifice our Covetouſneſs, our Reſentments, our Revenge, our Pride and our other evil Paſſions. This Charity is not incompatible with what we firſt of all owe to our ſelves: It is juſt and reaſonable and appears in this, that it is not without Regret that we are forced to hurt others to ſave our ſelves: They who by theſe Words of the Pſalmiſt, *I held my Peace even from Good*, underſtand, that *David* choſe rather to hide his Innocence, than to reveal the Injuſtice and Perſecutions of his Enemies, muſt hold that this Silence was far from the Principle I have eſtabliſhed. But to them I muſt ſay, that I think their Interpretation is very far from the Tho't of the Pſalmiſt,

Pſal 39. 2.

Sect. VII.

Pſalmiſt, who in ſo many Places juſtifys himſelf of the Calumnies of his Enemies, and has laid open their Malice and Sins. In a Word, If it muſt be underſtood that he was ſilent and ſpake not of his own Innocence, it was for Reaſons which wou'd not contradict what we have alledged.

For the Reaſons already mentioned, It is lawful for Kings, Princes and States who declare War againſt others, to ſhew by their Manifeſtoes, the Juſtice of their Arms, that ſo their Subjects may without ſcruple ſerve in their Armies. All thoſe Reaſons which ſhould cauſe any Prince to undertake a War, as the Tranquillity and Liberty of their People; a juſt Defence againſt an unjuſt and powerful Enemy, and all other Reaſons, ſhould lead them to declare, that they undertake the War juſtly, altho' with Regret. So that if it be lawful to wage War on certain Occaſions, it is alſo lawful to ſhew why it is undertaken. They muſt only beware of injurious and provoking Words, and ſuch like, which may ſow Diſcord and are contrary to the Deſign they ſhould propoſe in the War, which is only to obtain a good and firm Peace thereby.

For the ſame Reaſon it is lawful for Advocates to ſet forth under the foregoing Reſtrictions, the Right which their Clients have to complain of the oppoſite Party; and for Magiſtrates to declare the Cauſes

SECT. VII.

why they condemn any Man. This can't be doubted of, supposing, as in reality it is, lawful for a Man to defend his own Interests and for a Magistrate to condemn the Guilty.

11*th* CASE.

'Tis a Question whether one had better not speak ill of a Person, than to let another Man suffer a Damage which he might avoid, if he were told that the Person whose Company he frequents, is a Debauchee, a Cheat, *&c.*

To this I answer, that we ought to acquaint a Person who is dear to us and with whom we have a Commerce, that he must avoid the Company of a Debauchee, because his Company may corrupt him; and we should tell him of the Cheats of any with whom he converses, especially if he demand our Advice and Counsel as to what he ought to do.

What makes me embrace this side is, that I suppose the Case so circumstanced, that we can't pleasure the one Party without injuring the other. Now 'tis certain, that we had better do service to an honest Man who addresses himself to us, than to a debauch'd, proud, vicious Fellow. This is beyond Dispute.

2. In holding our Peace at such a Time we give Occasion to the Wicked to exercise their Rogueries and Malice, and to gratify

gratify their criminal Paſſions. Everyone owns, that we ought to take the Sword out of a mad Man's Hand, wherewith he may wound others; ſo alſo we ought to diſcover a Man's Vices, when we fear he will hurt others. Yet here we muſt take Care of two Things, SECT. VII.

1. We muſt be very certain, that he whom we ſpeak ill of before others, is really a great Cheat, a Rogue, &c.

2. If it be more than probable, that the Rogue will not cheat and corrupt thoſe who frequent his Society, we ought not to diſcredit him. I think this Reaſon is beyond reply, namely, That it is moſt certain that by detracting we ſhall wrong him, whereas according to our Suppoſition, it is not certain that he will injure thoſe who ask our Advice & to whom we owe it. So that otherwiſe for a doubtful & uncertain Evil, we ſhould do a certain one; which ought not to be.

12th CASE.

As to Satyrs, my Opinion is, That they are very lawful when they attack only Vices, without naming the Perſons which have theſe Vices. It is very advantageous and very profitable that the Folly and Enormity of Vice be diſcovered ſeriouſly, or by pleaſant Drollery. But it is very pernicious to diſcredit Perſons, and enflame them with Hatred and Wrath againſt theſe

SECT. VII.

who expose their Foibles. They who name Persons as well as Vices do plainly shew, that it is not the Love of Virtue which induced them to detract, but Vanity, Wrath or some other evil Cause. We have the Confession of the most famous * Satyrists on our side. I shan't stop to confute the contrary Opinion and the Reasons and Excuses therefor which are no ways valid, and especially when they are bro't by Christians, and when Christians are the Objects of these Satyrs.

13*th* *CASE.*

Some may ask, Whether 'tis lawful to speak of those Sins which Persons glory in. This at first seems a Paradox. What, some will say, Are there any Persons so impious and daring as to glory in their own Crimes! 'Tis hard, I own, for those who know but little of the World, to believe that it is thus. But alas it is too true! Are there not Men, or may I say Devils incarnate, who glory in their Faculty at Debauching others; who brag of their Cruelty and their Excess in Wine, *&c.* Some will demand, Whether it be a Sin to publish what they

Phil 3. 19. Isa. 3. 9.

---

* Archilochum proprio Rabies armavit Jambo.
Horat. Ars Poetica.

L'Ardeur de se montrer, ou plutot de medire,
Arma la verité du Vers de la Satire.
Boileau Art. Poetique.

themselves

themſelves publiſh. I anſwer, That I am not of the Mind of thoſe Caſuiſts, who think that it is not; and on the contrary, I think theſe Crimes ſhould be concealed, SECT. VII.

1. Becauſe tho' ſuch a Men take Pleaſure in relating their own Debaucheries, yet they wou'd be very uneaſy to have others ſpeak of 'em.

2. We ought not to help another in deſtroying his Honour, even as we ought not to aid his in deſtroying and ruining himſelf.

3. The Knowledge of theſe Things muſt needs be very pernicious and ſcandalous to thoſe who hear us ſpeak of 'em.

4. If they ſtrive to outgo ordinary Sinners in Vice, that ſo the World may talk of 'em, then the mentioning them wou'd but gratify & encourage 'em in their fooliſh Vanity and their Crimes; whereas perhaps they wou'd refrain if they ſaw we diſdain'd to talk of their Vices.

14th CASE.

It may be enquired, Whether it be lawful or indifferent for a Man to ſpeak ill of himſelf? There are but few Perſons will do this, but yet there are ſome who pretend hereby to give undeniable Evidences of their Sincerity; or elſe who wou'd do honour to their Vices, as has been ſhewn in the foregoing Article.

To

Sect. VII.

To reſolve this Queſtion, we may ſay in general, that a Man ought not ſo to do, becauſe it is ordinarily a bragging of Debauchery or Indiſcretion, or an Itch of talking, or a Weakneſs of Wit, which makes one chooſe rather to ſpeak ill of himſelf than to be ſilent, or ſome other evil Source, which are the Cauſes why he diſcovers his own Defects. The whole of it then may be reduced to this, whether it be lawful to be a great Babler, to be indiſcreet, imprudent, impudent, and weak-headed: which no one will approve of. Theſe Cauſes then being evil, they can produce no good. 2. The Evil we ſay of our ſelves may ſcandalize others, and therefore to be abſtained from. 3. We are obliged to take care of our own Reputation.

I ſay nevertheleſs, that in certain Caſes when our ſins have been publick, we may confeſs and condemn them before thoſe who may be ſcandalized at them; and then this Confeſſion is Part of the Repentance which we teſtify for our Faults. So *David* in *Pſal.* 51. confeſſed both his Adultery and Homicide. We may alſo confeſs Sins to thoſe Friends from whom we think to receive Inſtructions proper to ſave us from falling into them again; or laſtly, to thoſe whom we have offended, by owning our Faults to them and asking their forgiveneſs. Except in theſe Caſes, let us be content to

confeſs

confeſs our Sins to GOD, to repent of 'em, and to reform. SECT. VII.

15th CASE.

Some may ask, Whether it be not lawful to ſpeak of a Man's ill Qualities, after having ſpoken of his good ones? I anſwer abſolutely, No. Becauſe his Virtues won't do him ſo much honour as his Vices will diſhonour. We are obliged to be honeſt Men and good Chriſtians. Such as are ſo, are no more than what they ought to be, ſo that there is not much Merit therein. Whereas we are forbidden to be wicked and vicious, and this is the Reaſon why Vices hurt the Vicious and marr their Credit and Fortune. On the other Hand, Men are more inclined to believe evil than good, and to hate a Man for his Vices, than to love him for his Virtues. Beſides, if we ſhew that a Man has as many or more imperfections than he has commendable Qualities, it plainly ſhews that he is a very imperfect Chriſtian. Now to be but an imperfect good Man, is to be Vicious: Imperfection, Indifference, Luke-warmneſs, Halting between GOD and the World, are Things which paſs for Sins in holy Writ, and thus we do a very conſiderable Evil to their Reputation.

16th CASE.

It may be asked perhaps, Whether it be ſinful barely to tell one's Opinion (when we

SECT. VII.

we are desired to do it) concerning any Action of our Neighbour, which is sinful and blameable? I answer, No. Because it is never lawful to call Vice, Virtue; and because we should never lye. Moreover in praising an evil Action, we shall lay a Foundation for those who hear us, to imitate what they hear commended, which is contrary to the Instruction to Sincerity and the Love we owe others. We must always call Evil, Evil.

Ja. 5. 20.

17th CASE.

It may be asked, What we are to do, when in order to clear one Man, we are obliged to accuse another? I answer, that in such a Case we are to justify the Innocent, altho' we should be forced to hurt the other, and this because we ought rather to serve a good Man than a wicked Man, as has been before observed.

It must be here remarkt with reference to the Doubts we may be in, If such and such Words are Sins of Detraction, we must choose the more general and more sure, which is no Detracting. And thus we must cut the Knot when we can't unty it.

18th CASE.

Since there are many Exceptions in particular Cases, some may ask, Whether there be not also Exceptions in Persons, that is, whether there be not some so vile & abject in their Condition, that we may without sin,

ſin ſpeak ill of 'em. 'Tis the Opinion of ſome Authors and Popiſh Caſuiſts, that it is ſo, but this is not mine. For, SECT. VII.

1. *S. Paul* is expreſs hereupon. He ſays we ought to ſpeak ill of no Man; no one of the humane Race, of what Condition ſoever he may be. He forbids detracting not only Powers, but even univerſally any Man. Tit. 3. 2.

2. He tells us to do good to all Men; we muſt then ſpeak ill of no Man, ſince if we detract from any Man we do not do good at all or to all. He requires us alſo to preſent to GOD Prayers, Requeſts and Supplications for all Men; we muſt not then backbite any Man, which is ſo oppoſite to the Prayers and Supplications he mentions, and which we ought to preſent to GOD for all Mankind.

3. GOD has no Reſpect to the Appearance of Perſons, becauſe All are the Work of his Hands; thus the Quality of the Detractor and the Meanneſs of the Detracted, do not at all alter the Detraction in Reality. Beſides that properly ſpeaking, there is no Chriſtian vile, after having been bought with ſo high a Price, as that of the precious Blood of Jeſus Chriſt. 1 Pet. 1. 17.

In fine, our Saviour himſelf teaches us in the Parable of the *Samaritan* wounded by Robbers, that neither the miſerable State of Men, nor the Difference of Religion, Luk. 10. 31, 32, & ſeq.

nor

SECT. VII.

nor that of a Country, should hinder us from looking upon them all as our Neighbours, and from doing them good as such.

19th CASE.

Lastly, It may be enquired, Whether Ignorance of a Fact or of Right does not hinder Detraction from being a Sin, when it is the Effect of either Ignorance? This Question is of great Importance, wherefore we shall make some Stop here, and begin with the Ignorance of Right; and as every one perhaps don't well comprehend the Signification of these Terms, we shall explain them.

By the Ignorance of Right we intend, an Ignorance in a Man, that Detraction is a Sin; and by Ignorance of Fact, we intend an Ignorance that what we are speaking against our Neighbour, is a Detraction.

And to begin with the first Sort. This Ignorance does not hinder Detraction from being a Sin, since it is only insurmountable Ignorance, and whereof it is impossible to get rid, which, can excuse Sinners before GOD. Now 'tis certain that this Ignorance is not invincible. This is proved, because Detraction is opposite to that Principle of Justice which the Creator has engraven on the Hearts of all Men, which consists in doing to others as we wou'd be done by. Far then from being invincible, we need but descend into our own Hearts,

and

and look into our own Conſciences, to know, that Detraction, being oppoſite to this Principle, is a Sin againſt the Law of Nature. That this Ignorance is not invincible may be prov'd from this, that *S. Paul* in his Epiſtle to the *Romans*, places Detraction in the Rank of the Sins of the Heathen, whoſe whole Law was only that of Nature; now if this Ignorance cou'd not excuſe them, how ſhould it excuſe Chriſtians, that have ſo much Light which the others had not? SECT. VII. Rom. 1. 30.

There are, I own, ſome of the Caſes, which we have examined in this Section, about which it is more eaſy to be miſtaken, and which demand Knowledge and Judgment and which ſeem in ſome Meaſure to excuſe the Faults we fall into by Detraction, when we ought not to; inaſmuch as there are Exceptions to the general Rule that we ought not to detract.

To this I anſwer, That there are few of theſe Caſes but what we may our ſelves get over by a little Attention, and by the Help of GOD's Word. 2. Reaſon it ſelf dictates, that we ought to be ſilent and not detract, when we are in doubt whether it be a Sin to do it in that particular Caſe.

As to Ignorance of Fact, I hold, that it is utterly impoſſible *That* ſhould excuſe it. For who does not know whether he ſpeaks ill of his Neighbour, whether he hurts his Reputation

SECT. VII.

Reputation, or no, and in a Word, whether he ſays good or ill of him?

From what has been ſaid, it follows, that it wou'd be a very ill Way to excuſe Detraction, to ſay, I did not believe, or I did not know that ſuch a Diſcourſe was a Sin or a Detraction. One part of his Ignorance is impoſſible, the other may be ſurmounted. Neither of 'em then can ſerve for an Excuſe. All that is done without Faith, that is, without a Perſuaſion that what we do is good, is a Sin, but contrary wiſe, all that is done with this ſort of Faith, is not a Virtue nor an Excuſe.

Rom. 14, 23.

20th CASE.

One may ask, Whether it be lawful to reveal a Secret that may be hurtful to the Perſon that ſaid or committed, certain Things that cannot be diſcovered without ruining his or her Character, when at the ſame time the Knowledge of that Secret is uſeful to another Perſon? I anſwer, that if I know that Secret only by means of the Perſon that has intruſted me with it, it is plain, that Juſtice, which in all Caſes is to go before Charity, obliges me not to diſcover it, and that conſequently whatever Advantage might acrue by it to another by ſpeaking, I am to be ſilent and not reveal the Secret.

In ſhort, if any religious, natural or any other Duty obliges me to be more tender

of

of one Person than that of anothers, if two Persons are not equally concerned in my speaking or my silence, if by speaking or not speaking, I do more good to the one than to the other; these or such like Considerations ought to be our guides in such Cases as these, where People are afraid of acting against that great Rule and excellent Virtue, Charity, and hurting unavoidably somebody by their silence as well as by their speaking, and in which so much equality appears. For it is very seldom but that one may find in the Things themselves, or the outward Circumstances which accompany them, some Reasons that may help to resolve his Doubts, and make his Choice, tho' the Danger seems to be equal of both sides, and the Reasons of that Danger, have seemingly an equal force. SECT. VII.

After all it is impossible to resolve all Cases. As human Actions are almost infinite, so there is a vast Number of Circumstances that may vary those Actions, and therefore there is an infinite Number of possible Combinations of all those Things and every one of these Combinations produces a particular Case; in all which Cases there are great many Dangers to be avoided, and many Cautions are to be taken, in order to judge and act rightly; for tho' we may find the Decision of them in the Word of GOD, yet even that Decision requires a

SECT. VII.

long Chain of Reaſonings and Thoughts, which generally include very obſcure Propoſitions and long Diſcuſſions. And often we have but Probabilitys to judge by, in which Caſe we muſt chuſe thoſe that ſeem the moſt agreable to the Glory of GOD, and the good of our Neighbours.

The Uſes *of this Section.*

WHat we have ſaid as to the various Caſes wherein Detraction is not a Sin, far from favouring it, does moſt vehemently urge againſt it. The Exceptions we have eſtabliſhed, far from being advantageous to it, do give it the laſt Blows, and ſerve to confirm the general Rule, which forbids Detraction, according to that Axiom of Philoſophers, *Exceptio firmat Regulam.* And truly Exceptions ſhew, That all which is not excepted, is contained in the Rule we ought to follow, and is very certain and beyond all doubt. You may beſides this have obſerved, that there are Exceptions to Exceptions, which return after this Manner into the general Precept, Not to detract, and conſequently there are without Compariſon more Occaſions, wherein we ought not to detract than wherein we may do it.

In

In fine, take Care to keep exactly within the Limits and Bounds we have marked, and in which Detraction may be lawful, since if you ever so little exceed these Limits, you enter into the Path of Injustice and Sin; you eat the forbidden Fruit, and enter into the Devil's Empire, whose Subjects and Slaves you become. SECT. VII.

SECTION VIII.

Answers to the Objections made in favour of Detraction.

ALL that we have hitherto said against Detraction, wou'd be perhaps to little purpose, if we shou'd not answer the Objections which are made to authorize and uphold this Sin. We know how ready a Man is to deceive himself, how he loves an Error that flatters him, and what Efforts he needs to make him renounce it. From thence it arises, that altho' we present him with the Truth in all its Light, he endeavours to elude its Force, and to obscure its Evidence by a thousand Pretences, Excuses and Sophisms, which he opposes thereto, that so with some Colour he may continue in his vicious

SECT. VII.

Bias. Perſuaded of this, we go on in this Diſcourſe to take away the Vails under which Detractors lurk ; and to force the Walls where they lye entrenched, by anſwering the Objections they bring in Favour of this dear Idol.

I.

Some ſay that Detraction is very uſeful to keep Perſons to their Duty, becauſe when they know their Conduct is decryed on Account of their Vices, they will do their utmoſt to get rid of 'em, that ſo they may give no Cauſe for Infamy and Diſhonour which are the Fruits of an irregular Life ; and thus Detraction, far from being contrary to Charity, is a true Charity.

To this I anſwer, 1. That if it were Charity that makes any Man ſpeak ill of others, he wou'd not do it in their Abſence, as is very ordinary. To them he would addreſs himſelf to diſcover their Faults, that ſo they might amend them. To them alone I ſay, wou'd he addreſs himſelf, and wou'd act after a quite different Manner from what he does, to make them perceive the Wrong there is in abandoning themſelves to their Paſſions, and the Injury which they do them. He wou'd go and converſe with them in Private, and with mildneſs wou'd lay all theſe Things open to their View, and reprove them in a Chriſtian manner.

2. That

SECT. VII.

2. That this Way of Acting is very opposite to Charity, appears from hence, that Charity covers all, even the most publick Things, whereas Detraction discovers all even the most secret Things. On this Principle of Detracting to keep Persons to their Duty, we may also kill them by our own Authority, to hinder them from committing any more the Sins on Account whereof we detract from 'em; which every one sees is the last Absurdity.

Besides this, I say that Detraction is no way proper to correct the vicious. If it be thro' Vanity, Pride or Jealousy that you speak ill of 'em, do they not see in you Examples of Vice, which may serve them, altho' without Reason, as Motives to continue in their own Vices, in their Ambition, in their Self-Love, &c. Don't think that they won't discover what it is, that makes you tear them in pieces? Do you think to make Persons more pious and devout by giving them Occasions to hate you, to loath you and to hurt you as you hurt them? Don't we every Day see by Experience, that they whose Faults have been once discover'd and published, far from repenting, do many Times become more wicked, and as a Recompence for a lost Reputation, do give themselves up to all Sorts of criminal Pleasures? They no longer mind a good which they have lost, and give themselves

SECT. VIII.

up publickly to their vicious Inclinations. Many do even perſuade themſelves, that there is more Shame in repenting, than in perſiſting in their Faults. How then can you hope to correct one Vice by another, that is, to convert Sinners by ſinning your ſelf thro' your Detractions?

As by Violence and Perſecution Men never make true Converts and good Proſelytes, ſo we never make Perſons the better by tearing their Reputation. We may perhaps engage 'em to hide their Crimes better, and to ſave appearance better: But that is all. Add to this, that if Detraction hinders ſome Faults, it produces an infinite Number of other Sins, as we have ſhewn when we laid open its Effects.

Some again object and ſay, that by ſhewing the Hateſulneſs of Sin in thoſe who go on therein, we engage others to be upon their Watch that they fall not into thoſe Diſorders, which ruined thoſe whom we cite as Examples.

But I anſwer, that there are many other and more effectual Ways to make Men quit Vice. Can we not, if we pleaſe, cite to them the ſorrowful Example of Sinners who have even in this World born the Puniſhment of their Sins, and whoſe Hiſtory is contained in the holy Scripture, which preſents to our Eyes and as alive, theſe whom it ſpeaks of? So certain and undoubted

doubted is it! Can't we lay open to their View all those great Motives which the Scripture presents us with a!, to make us embrace Virtue? Sect. VIII.

'Tis still further Objected, that they who are not as yet plunged in Vice, by seeing that the Wicked lose their Reputation thereby, are kept to their Duty thro' fear of the like Evil.

I answer, that they who have no other Motive which hinders them from doing Evil, than this Fear of Men, do even in this already commit Sin, since GOD requires that it be a Fear of displeasing him which must urge us to Duty. They are true Hypocrites who do good only thro' Consideration of the World. They preserve their outside, but the inside is Evil, since were it not thro' fear of what the World wou'd say or do, they wou'd make an open Profession of Libertinism and Debauchery. Moreover, we must not imagine, that all those who do not fear GOD enough to purify their Heart, who do not sufficiently stand in awe of that mighty GOD, who can plunge them into miseries Eternal, will fear more the Evil which the World can do them by taking away their Reputation?

II.

A second Objection, or rather a second Excuse which is bro't to justify Detraction, or to lessen the Sin, is, that if we do not

SECT. VIII.

speak ill of our Neighbour, especially when others in the same Company do it, we shall be looked upon as ridiculous, dull, stupid, contradictory, Men-Haters, and Persons of an ill-contrived Spirit.

I answer to this, *First*, That if it be a Sin to abstain from Evil only thro' humane Considerations, it is a greater Sin to do Evil thro' fear of passing among Men for a stupid Blockhead.

Secondly, The Profession of Christians obliges them to bear the Cross; to suffer Shame and Contempt and all that is vexatious in this World, when the Glory of GOD requires it and his Commands prescribe it; so that consequently we ought to endure with Patience, yea with Joy, all that Men can say to our Disadvantage on this Account.

Thirdly, Our silence can't much hurt our Reputation, for it is certain, that not only pious Persons but in general all those that have any Judgment, far from despising, will esteem us, and look upon us as prudent Persons, who will not expose our selves to all the Vexations which Detraction exposes its Partisans unto.

Fourthly, They who do detract are oftentimes Persons of the least Wit. The more they detract, the more they shew their Want of a Fund, and that they can produce nothing of their own. For where is the need

need of Wit to detract? The most ignorant, silly and foolish Fellow alive, has Ability enough to tell the Faults which others have committed? Is there need of long Study, and the Knowledge of Tongues, to detract? Must he be well versed in all Sorts of Literature whatever, to backbite? If there be need of Wit to rail agreeably, as they say, it were better to be without that Wit, inasmuch as this railing and deriding Wit comes only from the Devil. Let us know, That altho' we cou'd speak as the most Learned and Eloquent among Men, yea as Angels, yet we are nothing if we have not Charity, according to *S. Paul.* SECT. VIII. 1 Cor. 13. 1.

You say that if you don't detract with Detractors, you pass for ridiculous Persons; but they might as well call all those ridiculous, who read GOD's Word and go to Church for Instruction: Is it then more ridiculous to profit by Exhortations, than to read and hear them? Verily they are more ridiculous themselves, who for this treat others as ridiculous. You say, you shall pass for Men-Haters and Persons of an ill-contrived Spirit. But pray, who is a *Misanthropos*, if it be not a Man who hates Society and Men; (which is the Etymology of the Word) and who hates Men more than those who backbite 'em? Let Men call you Persons of an ill-contrived Spirit; but who has an ill-turned Spirit, if

he

SECT. VIII.

he who turns his towards Evil & Detraction' has not ?

Let Men call you contradictory ; but who is more so than a Detractor, who contradicts his neighbour's Benefit ; who speaks ill of him, in Opposition to those who speak well of him, and who repeats Men's Actions and blames them in their Absence ?

Suppose you should pass for an Hypocrite ; had you not better pass for such a one unjustly and among unrighteous Persons, than to pass for a Detractor justly ? Let us endeavour to do what GOD orders us, and afterward let us not care for what Men may say of us. This is the Answer I wou'd make to those who may reply, that when we give Occasion to others to esteem us Hypocrites, we are Causes of their rash Judgments and their Lyes. It is true, that as far as it lyes in our Power, we ought not to give cause hereof, but still we must not Sin to please them ; besides that in this Case, they who do not detract are but very innocent Causes of the ill Judgment of another.

Lastly, If for fear of giving Occasion to the Judgments of others, we must always Study to please them, we should be very miserable by reason of the Pains we must put our selves to, and because of the utter impossibility of ever attaining thereto : For it is utterly impossible to please all the World.

This

This last *Objection* was grounded upon our fear of the Judgments of Men; the next is grounded upon their Example and Authority. SECT. VIII.

III.

Some say, 'tis very hard not to imitate what we see practised every Day; and that we must allow something for Use & Custom and other Things of that Nature.

'Tis astonishing that Christians should talk at this Rate. What then, do not they who bring these Things for an Excuse, accuse themselves of infringing on GOD's Commands, which so frequently forbids us to *follow a Multitude to do Evil*, or to *conform our selves to this present evil World*, or to *love the World?* Can any one be ignorant, that we are not to judge according to that wicked Law, but according to the Laws of GOD's Word, whose Maxims ought to be the Rules of all others, and to be preferred before them? If we ought to follow Custom in the Matter of Detraction, then we ought also to be Swearers, Perfidious, Impure; in a Word we ought to have all other Vices which reign in the World, as well as Detraction; and even all those which are quite opposite to each other, as Avarice and Prodigality, because we see these Vices bear an equal sway in the World. Rom. 12. 1 John 2.

Be

SECT. VIII.

Be not mistaken, the generality of a Sin does never excuse it. They shan't suffer a whit the less in Hell for having many Companions in Misery; also on Earth we do not sin a grain the less for being with a great Number of Sinners.

By Virtue of what, may we dispense with Duty thro' Custom? Is it a Rule it self? Has Custom any right to publish Men's Sins? And if it has not, How can it give Detractors a Right which it never had it self? *Nemo ad alium transferre potest plus Juvis quam habet ipse.* Digest. Artic. 54.

On the contrary, It is the Number and Multitude of Sinners which more provokes GOD. Because all the City of *Sodom* was plunged in Wickedness, except the Family of *Lot*, and because Ten righteous Persons, were not found in this abominable Place, therefore GOD was obliged to reduce it to Ashes, in a Way as contrary to Nature as their Sins were. It is not with GOD as with Men. A Prince is many Times constrained to grant a general Pardon to a whole People which rose up against him, because he is not powerful enough to reduce 'em to Obedience by force of Arms, or because otherwise he would destroy his Dominions and see himself a King without Subjects. But GOD has more than Power enough to extirpate his rebellious Creatures, and in their stead to raise himself

ſelf Children from the very Stones in the Street, *Matth.* 3. 9. SECT. VIII.

St. *Peter* followed the Multitude when he ſuffer'd the Remains of the ceremonial Law of *Moſes*, to abide in Chriſtianity. But did this hinder St. *Paul* from reproving him to his Face and with warmth? and yet there was only Imprudence in the Conduct of the Apoſtle *Peter*. How then can Uſe & Cuſtom excuſe thoſe in whom we meet with a deep Malignity?

I wou'd now ask Chriſtians, If they were among the *American* Idolaters, who worſhip and invoke the Devil, Whether they wou'd do the ſame thing, eſpecially if they were not forced to it? Doubtleſs, No, or elſe they would ceaſe to be Chriſtians. The Number and Multitude of thoſe whom they ſaw worſhipping the Devil, would not excuſe them. So, tho' in *America*, *Europe*, and in other Parts of the World, there are thoſe who follow the *Doctrines of Devils* with regard to Detraction, and who pay incenſe to this Idol; yet for all this, they who imitate them are not the leſs blameable. On the contrary, The more Vice rules, the more we ought to oppoſe it. The more a Torrent ſwells and rages, the more haſty ought we to be in raiſing Dykes to ſtop its Waves. Far from leading a Perſon on by our wicked Example, we ought ſtrongly to withſtand thoſe of others. 1 Tim. 4. 1.

Here

SECT. VIII.

Here you will say, What can a few Examples do against an almost universal Corruption? I answer, First, This Corruption wou'd not be so universal, if Men followed my Advice. Still further, altho' our good Examples do not extend very far, yet they will be of use to those who know us. They will strengthen and comfort good Persons, and many Times will put Detractors to silence. Believe me, Vice is cowardly; it triumphs only when it finds those that favour it; but it dares not appear before Virtue, to which it ever does Homage: Suppose even that your Virtue does no good to others, yet it will at least serve your selves, by helping your Salvation.

Men must, say some, follow the Stream. I say, Let them follow the Croud: Let them enter in at the wide Gate, and at the End of their Carrier, at the End of their Journey, they will find themselves in the Abyss, the Lake of Fire and Brimstone. Since you chuse to please the Devil & wicked Men, rather than GOD, you shall go away with those whom you loved to please. Don't flatter your selves, that you can serve GOD and the World too. *No Man can serve two Masters*, especially Masters so opposite and different as these are.

Mat. 6. 24.

IV.

Some object and say, That if we mayn't detract, we shall have nothing to say in Company

Company, and ſhall be obliged to talk of the Weather, and ſuch trifling things, which would ſpoil all the agreeableneſs of Converſation. I anſwer, 'Tis a great Error to think we ſhall have nothing to talk of, for in Religion, in humane Learning, and in civil Affairs, there are an infinite Number of Things, that may be talked of to Edification, or at leaſt without Scandal. SECT. VIII.

But after all, it is better to talk of the Weather, than of things which may hurt both our ſelves and our Neighbours. Still further, Detractors are for the moſt part great Talkers about nothing, and diſcourſe only of Trifles, and are ſo much the worſe Authors, inaſmuch as what they produce is not from their own Stock.

Moreover, This Excuſe is only a Pretence to cover a Man's Malignity, and the true Principle he acts from. And indeed, were it only to uphold Converſation, wou'd not Detractors be content to ſpeak of Faults, without naming and ſhewing the Perſons in whom they are found?

In fine, If you are induced to detract by the Company of Detractors, who turn all the Diſcourſe this way, you muſt avoid them; and if you are with virtuous Perſons, you may ſpeak of Subjects proper for Edification and againſt Detraction it ſelf.

All the agreeableneſs and pleaſure of Converſation, ſay ſome, is ſpoiled by refrain-

ing

Sect. VIII.

ing Raillery & Detraction. I answer, that this Pleasure is by no means essential to Conversation, since it may have much more agreable Pleasures, and that even Persons who have any Goodness at all, do find no Pleasure in Detraction. I add, That a Man has incomparably more Pleasure in the Sentiment of his own Innocence, than in the Enjoyment of this brutish Pastime. The Remorses which Detractors feel for the Commission of this Sin, and the Sorrows which lay hold of them in the Hour of Death, and their eternal Damnation, if they do not feel the Sorrows of a Repentance which may appease GOD, make them know, that all these short Pleasures which they have taken in Raillery, are like the Book which the Prophet *Ezekiel* swallowed, that was *sweet in his Mouth, but within full of Curses, Woes & Miseries:* Not to mention here the Enmities & Disgraces from Men, which they meet withal.

Ezek. 2. 10. & 3. 3.

V.

Some say, that we should lose the Company of many Persons who oblige us only, because we willingly hear their Detractions, or divert them with ours.

But what matters it in the End, if we do lose the Company of those who are not our true Friends, seeing 'tis only a criminal Complaisance we have for them, that makes them cleave to us? What matters it to

lose

loſe the Company of thoſe whom we muſt ſoon forſake, if they don't forſake us firſt? What Good ſhall we get by their Society, if it draws on us the Hatred of thoſe whom they and we ſpeak ill of? SECT. VIII.

VI.

Some imagine to ſay much in favour of Detraction, by alledging that we have in the Bible many Examples of pious Perſons who have detracted. Without entring at preſent into an Examination of each Paſſage in particular that may be bro't to prove their Aſſertion, we ſhall only remark in general, 1. That the greateſt Part of thoſe whom the holy Scripture ſpeaks ill of, were dead, and ſo to detract from them was no Sin. 2. That *David* and other holy Perſons were inſpired by the Lord, who revealed to them, that the Heart of thoſe whom they ſpake ill of, was never to be converted; and that they detracted at GOD's Command, whereas we have no ſuch Inſpirations. What ſufficiently ſhews, that it was by expreſs Orders from this great Maſter, which Orders we cannot apply to us, is this, that they themſelves condemn Detraction. 3. That they were not without Sin in their Actions, and that if there be any particular Evil in their Conduct, we ought not to imitate it. 4. That they did thus many Times, for their own Vindication or for the Good of the Church. As it is

SECT. VIII.

certain, that the Diſciples of our Lord, who in their Writings have ſet forth their own Defects or thoſe of others, without any evil Ends in view, and without acting from bad Principles, have given great Proofs of their Sincerity, in that they did not ſpare themſelves, nor the chief Doctors of the Religion they had embraced; and by this Sincerity, a great Proof of the Truth of that Religion. In fine, If they did detract, it was on Occaſions where Detraction was lawful, and in Caſes ſet forth in the preceding Section. In vain one makes uſe of the Authority of the Scripture for Detraction, ſince it is condemned ſo ſtrongly by it.

VII.

Some will ſay, That if we don't detract, when we hear a Man's Faults told of, we ſhall paſs for ſuch as favour the Faults. I anſwer, That this is a groundleſs Fear, ſince he who then ſays nothing, is as much on the ſide of thoſe who blame, as of thoſe who are blamed: For ſometimes he who is not againſt us, is for us, as ſometimes he who is not for us is againſt us. I add, That we ought, as far as reaſonably may be, not only be ſilent, but to take the Part of the Abſent and leave others raſhly to judge what they pleaſe.

Luk 9. 50. Mat 11. 30

VIII.

Some ſay, Is it not known that every one has his Failings, and what matters it then

then ſhould we reveal on this Subject what no Perſon can be ignorant of? SECT. VIII.

I confeſs that all Men have their Faults, and that all the World is agreed in this; But this large and general Knowledge which we have of other Men's Faults, does no Man any harm, becauſe we don't know what are his particular Failings. And yet it is thoſe particular Faults which deſtroy a Perſon's Credit. It does not hurt any Perſon to know that he is a Man, altho' we know that there are always Faults & Imperfections attached to the humane Nature here below; But it will hurt any one to know that he has committed a Sin which Diſhonours him, that he has on ſome Occaſions been imprudent, that he has ſometimes acted with to much Warmth, and ſo of the reſt. This is what Detraction diſcovers and whereby it does more hurt, than a general and confuſed Knowledge. Beſides this, we know that there are many Degrees in this Frailty and this Corruption: We may think ſuch a Man is leſs vicious than others; But Detraction which ſhews the contrary, does maliciouſly take away this good, or rather, leſs diſadvantageous Opinion we had of ſuch or ſuch Perſon.

IX.

Some will ſay, Is it not lawful to tell the Truth and conſequently to detract, ſince in Detraction we tell the pure Truth?

SECT. VIII.

Tis true, our Thoughts and Words ſhould agree, this is eſſential to Truth, but we ſhould not tell all that we think, or all that we know. We ought not lye, but we ought to be ſilent as to certain Truths. Who will dare to ſay, that it is lawful to reveal a Secret truſted to us, and which wou'd be hurtful to a Perſon, under pretence that what we reveal is true?

Nevertheleſs, in moſt Occaſions of Life, the Defects of our Neighbours ought to be as a Secret which God himſelf requires us to keep. In a Word, Detraction is a Truth which we ought not to reveal, either in the Ear or *on the Houſe Top.*

Matth. 10. 27.

X.

Some will ſay, That if we do not publiſh the diſhoneſty or ill Practice of a Perſon, all the World will be miſtaken in him, and truſt their Intereſts with him, if People are not told of the Evils he may do them. So that it is for the publick Profit, that the wicked and vicious ſhould be well known and deſcribed.

This many will ſay with Warmth, and a ſeeming Zeal, as if it were Love for the Publick which made 'em bring this Objection and what it includes. But for Anſwer, I demand who has given any Man a particular Right and Authority thus publickly to defame any one's Reputation. All the World own, that it belongs only

to

to Magistrates thus to tarnish a Man's Reputation on Account of his Crimes, and this by Sentences, Arrests and Punishments. 'Tis to publick Persons whom the Providence of GOD has raised in Dignity, that these Judgments and these last defamatory Sentences belong. As they have in their own hands the Authority necessary for this, they have also ordinarily the Knowledge, the Prudence and the Means necessary to make and to execute their Arrest; things whereof the greatest Part, and commonly all these Qualities, are wanting in others. What Service then can a Man pretend to do the Publick, when he acts against publick Persons, by usurping their Authority? Sect. VIII.

Secondly, If what we publish is of so great Concern to Society, Why don't we tell it to the Magistrate, and let them punish the Wicked for their evil Actions?

Thirdly, Let us examine, Whether it be Love for the Publick which makes us speak so openly of a Man's Crimes. Certainly if we consider what we are doing, we shall often find that it arises only from a Spirit of private Revenge. If we have injured a Person, or if we have not, but he imagines we have; shall we of this private Affair go and make a publick one? Or because we fancy that we have been offended, must we pretend that all the Publick should take Part in this Offence? 'Tis thus we

SECT. VIII.

wou'd have our ſelves talked of and become conſiderable. What is there more unjuſt or more extravagant than this?

Are we ſuch publick Perſons, that the Publick muſt have ſuch a ſhare therein? This is the common Pretence of Princes, and many times of private Perſons, to get the Publick intereſted in their own particular Quarrels.

If we look further, We ſhall find that we make uſe of the ſpecious Pretence of Love for the Publick, as a Covering for Jealouſy, Self-Love and Covetouſneſs. If on a thouſand other Occaſions, we do nothing at all for this Publick we make ſuch a noiſe about; if we remain unprofitable to our Country, how can we think that it is the publick Good we wiſh and ſeek after on this Occaſion? On a thouſand Occaſions we might do the Publick & Society, much more good by concealing the Perſons, than by diſcovering them by their Faults. What Evil truly can a Perſon do, whom we are ignorant of & with whom conſequently we have no Commerce? Whereas Example and the Contagion of a Crime are always dangerous Things. Let us then entirely baniſh the Memory thereof. This is the Way to puniſh Criminals and to do ſervice to the Publick, to bury in Forgetfulneſs the Sins with the Sinners.

In

In fine, Let us imitate the Example of our blessed Saviour who sent away the adulterous Woman without judging her, when he had learnt that none of her Judges had condemned her. Thus when Sinners have received no Blot in their Reputation from the Magistrate or the Church, we must say, *Since no Man has condemned them, neither do I condemn them.* SECT. VIII.

It must be remembred, that what I here say must be in Subordination to the Cases taken notice of before, in which it is sometimes lawful to discover the Faults of others, and what I have here said does not contradict that, because in the preceeding Section I suppose that they were publick Errors which were publickly to be refuted, whereas here the Case is different.

XI.

Is it not lawful, say some, to talk of Crimes that are published abroad, and which the greatest Part of the World know? When a Person has already lost his Honour, what hurt will it be to him to tell how he lost it?

I demand, first, what they mean by these Faults, which are known abroad. If they mean those which are discover'd and punished by the Magistracy, doubtless it is lawful to speak of them. They have a Right to expose them to the View of all the World, and truly they do it, that so by the

SECT. VIII.

Example of Chastisement, others may beware how they violate the Laws. They punish Criminals publickly, that we may know and speak of them, thereby the Peace of a Society is preserved; In fine, none of these Things which hinder Detraction in other Circumstances, do permit it in this. But if by publick Sins, they mean those which are known only to many Persons in a City, and about which the Magistrate has judged nothing, I say we ought not to speak of them, and that then we ought to remember the general Precept against Detraction. If a Man has lost his Honour, was it not by Detraction, and why then should we follow a way which has already been so hurtful to him? And perhaps he has not lost it to such a Degree, as that whereto we do expose him. If a Man says, that it is needless to hide a Fault which many Persons know already: I answer by this Dilemma; either they to whom you speak of it, do already know it, or they do not. If they do know it, then 'tis needless for you to tell what they know already. If they do not know it, then you injure the interested Person, by making known his Faults to Persons who had not been informed thereof.

XII.

But, say some, Charity is not blind. What do they mean by this? if they mean

mean that Charity won't hinder a Man from seeing the Faults of others, I agree to it, but if they mean that Charity may publish Faults, which it sees; I deny it, otherwise what we call Charity wou'd be no more Charity. On the Occasion we mention, Charity changes as I may say, its Office, or rather this same Virtue makes use of quite different Forms from what it has on other Occasions. Commonly one of its Properties is to enlighten and instruct the Ignorant; here on the contrary it hides the Vices of another from those who are ignorant of 'em. In a word, if it is not blind, I say in our Subject it is mute! It is not deaf, not to hear what is said, but it is dumb not to divulge it. SECT. VIII.

XIII.

Some say, 'Tis impossible to help uttering a fine, witty Expression, a sharp Repartee against a Person when it comes into our Mind.

I reply, That in reality all this pretended impossibility is purely imaginary, and consequently unable to justify us before GOD, or any ways help the Cause of Detraction. There is no Man, but wou'd abstain therefrom, were he sure that his Tongue should be bored every Time he Detracted. Any one thro' fear of this Punishment wou'd refrain immediately: Why then don't we refrain thro' fear of far greater and more durable Pains in the other World,

Sect. VIII.

World, if we can't be perſuaded thereto thro' Love to GOD and thro' noble Principles ? If it be impoſſible to refrain Detraction, it will be far more impoſſible to endure eternal pains : What wou'd you do if you were obliged to ſuffer ten Thouſand Torments, and end your Life in Martyrdom, for GOD's Glory ? Nevertheleſs you ought to be always ready to be ſacrificed for him when his Law and his Glory require it, and you ought rather to ſuffer Death, than to break the leaſt of his Commands ; and to ſin againſt the Light of your own Conſcience : This is certain from Scripture and by the Practice of many Millions of Chriſtians. How then could you do this, if you have not Power enough over your ſelf to keep your Tongue ? Wou'd that be backward to deny Jeſus Chriſt, after having been ſo active and ready to inſult his Members ?

But if it ſeem impoſſible to refrain Detracting at our neighbour's Coſt, there appears in ſome Perſons a ſtill greater impoſſibility, not to detract from thoſe who had before ſpoken ill of them. I don't here ſpeak of thoſe moderate Juſtifications which are lawful, but of thoſe Recriminations, which properly do not juſtify, but only ſhew that he who firſt Detracted has at leaſt as many Defects as thoſe of whom he ſpake ill, which ſerve only to charge others with more

more Faults, without clearing our ſelves of thoſe which have been caſt on our Conduct. What, ſay ſome, won't it be lawful for me to detract from thoſe who firſt of all, and without my giving them any Subject therefor, have blaſted my Reputation! Thus paſſionate, haſty, revengeful Perſons talk. But true Chriſtians will reply, that we ought not to detract from a Detractor, for thereby we ſhall become guilty of what we blame in others. Private Revenge is as much forbidden, as pardon of Offences is required by GOD, who proteſts that he will not Pardon our Offences unleſs we forgive others the Wrongs they have done us, which Judgment we ſubſcribe to as often as we repeat the Prayer which the Saviour of the World taught his Diſciples, and which he has commanded us to repeat. Say not then, Such a Man has offended me not only once but many Times & many ways; For the written Word of GOD the Goſpel, yea the eternal Word, the Son of GOD, requires us to pardon not only ſeven Times but Seventy Times ſeven, and when this Number ſhall be accompliſhed, if you return and conſult this Word it will tell you again, Pardon him ſtill ſeventy Times ſeven who is your Enemy; and again multiply this Number by ſo many ſevens. Can any one be ignorant that our Lord by his Example and by his Precepts, commands us

Sect. VIII.

Rom. 12. 19

Matth. 18. 22.

Luke 6. 21

SECT. VIII.

us to bleſs them that curſe us, far from being revenged on them? An unhappy Battle that, in which we repel Detractions by Detractions! 'Tis with this as with Duels, whether the Engagers conquer or be conquered, 'tis ſtill fatal to them. If we fall under, the remainder of our own Honour and Credit is loſt; and if we have the upper hand, that of our Neighbour is ruin'd. Theſe two Extremities are fatal and there is no Medium. Still further, Suppoſe we ſhould obtain our End, even to ruin our Neighbour's Credit, yet we ſhall deſtroy our own with his. Not to mention here the infernal Damnation, which Revenge and Detraction ſhall one Day receive as the Reward of their Victory, nothing expoſes more to the Contempt of Men than this Sort of Revenge, which is really altogether ridiculous. Is not this a fine way indeed to juſtify our ſelves, to go and barely ſhew the Weakneſſes of our Accuſers, without producing any Thing for our own Innocence! To retort an Argument is not the way to Anſwer it. Is there any Thing more proper to deprive you of the Title of a wiſe and judicious Man, than to do what you condemn in others? Does not this ſhew a want of good ſenſe? And yet this is what theſe revengeful Perſons do. They complain that others ſpake evil of them, and they condemn this Vice in others, and

yet

yet they make no Difficulty to commit it. To act thus is to endeavour to overthrow a Reputation which they had only shaken: 'Tis to enlarge the Breach instead of repairing it; as has been elsewhere shewn. SECT. VIII.

XIV.

Some say, That there are Persons whose Malice is so great and so frequently used, that they don't deserve to be spared, or to have any regard shewn to their Reputation, and that they may thank themselves if they do lose their Honour, for it is but the Consequence of their Tricks, their Wickedness and their Vices.

I answer, We are not always to deal with Men according to their Deserts, but according to Charity. We are not to lay hold on every Occasion, unless we can do a Favour to our Neighbour. The greater his Faults are, and the more frequent his Falls, the more ought we to conceal them, that so we may, as we are obliged, raise this excellent Virtue to its highest Pitch. As the Law was not made for the Righteous, so Charity is not exercised towards the Rich and the Holy, but towards the Poor and the greatest Sinners. The more destitute a Person is of the Necessaries of this Life, the more need has he of our help and the more are we obliged to succour him. Even so, the more Persons fail in those Things necessary for the Maintenance of spiritual Life, 1 Tim. I. 9

SECT. VIII.

Life, the more charitable ought we to be towards them. For this End let us consider, that GOD bears with us notwithstanding our great infirmities; he does not fail to cause his Sun to rise, and his Rain to fall on the Wicked. Let us imitate his Actions and cause Grace to abound where Sin has abounded.

Matt. 5. 45.

Rom. 5. 20.

'Tis true, the Sins and Wickedness of Men are the occasional Causes and the Matter of Detraction, but in reality we must rather search for the Source thereof in Pride, and in the Malignity of Detractors, than in the Defects of the Detracted. What, because I have sinn'd, do I thereby necessarily engage others to publish these Defects! No, by no means. If I do lose my Credit, it is much rather by means of those who publish my Faults, than thro' my own Defects, which wou'd do me no Prejudice, if they did not spread them abroad. These Faults wou'd never do any hurt to my Honour, if others did not take Care to publish them and make them known.

In fine, some object, that they may detract in many Cases where the holy Scripture permits it. I own it, and have shewn what these Cases are in the foregoing Section, to which I refer the Reader.

The Uſes *of this Section.*

SECT. VIII.

IT is eaſy to ſhew in a Word the Weakneſs of the Objections made to authoriſe Detraction, by ſpeaking from what Principle they come. Theſe Principles are Ignorance and Corruption. 'Tis only the Ignorant, the half-Learned, and vicious World that will alledge them. WereMen better inſtructed in theScripture they wou'd eaſily of themſelves know, that theExamples and Paſſages they cite to uphold the Sin we are arguing againſt,do & ſay nothing at all that may favour it, at leaſt when 'tis taken in general.

Secondly, Corruption and Inclination to the World and to Sin, make Men bring theſe Paſſages againſt us. They love all the Sources of Detraction. They ſeek it becauſe it helps to ſatisfy their Self-Love and other Vices. Hence it is, that they ſeek in their Minds all the Reaſons which may ſerve them,to deceive themſelves, and to make them believe that there is none or but very little Evil in doing what pleaſes them. So ingenious a Love as this, will ſoon cauſe a Man to find the ſpecious Reaſons he is after. But as this Love is blind, it makes us take that for Solid which is not ſo at all. As we endeavour only to deceive our ſelves by Flattery, what we find is but an Illuſion and an Error. So that

Sect. VIII. that altho' we can't help acknowledging that what we love is criminal, yet we endeavour at least to excuse our selves because of Universality, Use and Custom, or because that otherwise we should pass for ridiculous, bigotted & hypocritical Persons, as has been shewn in this Section.

Thus whether we naturally love to detract, or too much love to please others, we say a Thousand vain Things, we make a thousand Evasions, to excuse our selves afterwards before that Witness and Judge we carry in our Consciences, and which is, properly speaking, our Conscience it self.

This shews that our Corruption, our Love to the World, and our Self-Love, are much oftener the Causes of the Objections we bring in Favour of Detraction, than want of Light and Knowledge necessary to answer them. We should certainly see the Wickedness of it, if we did not endeavour to hide it from our selves.

However it be, I have done my utmost to instruct you in what you might be ignorant of, and on the other Hand, I have shewn how criminal is this too great Complaisance we have for Men and that extraordinary Fondness we have for Esteem, and thereby I have answered Objections and endeavoured to root out the Cause of 'em, and all for your Profit. As the Excuse drawn from the numberless Multitude of

Examples

Examples of Detractors, is the most common, we shall finish by praying you to consider, That the generality hereof should be so far from being a Motive to follow the Multitude, that on the contrary it ought to be a Motive not to do thus, since this Universality furnishes us with so many the more Examples, that what follows Detraction is Sin and Vice; which is also further confirmed by the Word of GOD. SECT. VIII.

In fine, When thro' an evil Fear of passing in the World for Hypocrites and Persons of an ill-contrived Spirit, we are upon the Point of Detracting and Sinning against the Gospel of JESUS CHRIST. Let us then think of those terrible Words of the Gospel, *Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me, and of my Words, in this adulterous and sinful Generation, of him also shall the Son of Man be ashamed when he cometh in the Glory of his Father, with the holy Angels.* Mark 8. 38.

SECT. IX

SECTION IX.

Motives to avoid this Sin.

IN the foregoing Section we have forced Detractors from their very last Intrenchments, by shewing the Weakness of those Reasons which they commonly make use of as a Covert, and a Bulwark against those Texts of Scripture which press them; and the Reproofs which are made them of their Fault; and even the Remorses of their Consciences. Nevertheless we doubt still that we have not prevailed on Men to forsake this Vice; not that we doubt of the Validity of our Arguments and Answers, but because we are convinced of the ordinary Resistances of Men against the clearest and strongest Things, when once Inclination, Habit, Passion have taken Possession of the Heart. To fortify what has been already said, it will therefore be necessary to propose new Motives to engage Men to amendment.

1st MOTIVE.

Most of those Things which engage Men in Detraction, and are the Sources thereof, should keep them from it. Vanity and vain Glory are often the Causes of Detraction, yet these ought to make us shun it,

it, since hereby we satirize the evil Repu- SECT. IX
tation of furious and indiscreet Persons, which may sufficiently mortify Self-Love and Vanity. Sometimes Interest makes a Man detract, and yet this Interest should keep him from it, since Detraction draws on us the Hatred and Persecution of those we spake ill of; which is very opposite to our own Interest.

All that has been said to prove Detraction a Sin, and all the Effects justly attributed thereto, are so many powerful Reasons to keep us from it. A Dread of disobeying GOD who will chastise Detraction is a most urgent Motive against it. All the other Effects of this Sin, and a thousand Considerations already mentioned, must necessarily and of choice Estrange us from it.

2d MOTIVE.

Another great Consideration and which should oblige Men to quit this Sin is, That there is no Man but what sins and fails in his Duty. This is a Truth so certain, that a Part of Prayer and the Worship we render to GOD, consists in confessing our Sins. 'Tis a great mark that no Man is perfect, that all the World find imperfections in others. They who detract see Faults in those they speak ill of, and those in their turn find Faults in their Accusers. We can't say that either of 'em are mistaken 1 John 1. 8.

SECT. IX. and judge wrong. For tho' we are blind in our own Conduct, yet we can see clear enough in our Neighbour's. When all Men agree in the same Principles, there the Truth must needs be, for no Error is so general and universal as to spread over all the World. And since the whole Universe agree in finding Evil one in another, they must certainly be all vicious. I confess that every one thinks himself better and more perfect than he really is, we don't well know our own Defects or at least we don't enough think of 'em. Witness *David*, who well judged that the Man, *Nathan* spake of, who had taken away the poor Man's Lamb, was a Robber; and he did not at that Moment reflect that he himself had done a much greater Injustice to *Uriah*. We resemble those who are hunch-backt, who don't see the Load they carry about with 'em, continually even to the Grave, which they who walk behind 'em can easily see. All the Ways of a Man are right in his own Eyes, says the wise Men on this Occasion. But, besides that others do not judge after this Manner, Is it not easy for those who think their Ways so pure, to discover by Examination, that they are nothing near such as they imagined themselves to be? Let every Botch in a Man's Life be produced and felt of, and he will soon perceive that he is neither upright nor perfect.

2 Sam. 12, 7

Pro. 12. 15.

perfect. And altho' a Man had but this Fault of being a Detractor, at leaſt this is one. And altho' he ſhould not think himſelf ſuch, yet don't we all know that we have ſecret Faults, which we are to ask Forgiveneſs of from GOD, and to ſay with *David, Lord, Cleanſe thou me from ſecret Faults.* SECT. IX. Pſal. 19.

Since then every one is undoubtedly a Sinner, and ſince all Men have their Failings, with what Reaſon or Juſtice can we deride thoſe of others? Can we do it, without condemning our ſelves by accuſing our ſelves in the Perſon of others? 'Tis nevertheleſs as common as it is ridiculous, to ſee thoſe who would paſs for fine Raillers, begin to rail at themſelves and afterwards attack others. Can we ſee thro' it, that Perſons who have been diſcovering their own Failings, ſhould not bluſh to go to expoſe thoſe of others? How can a vicious Man deride Vice? Such Men ſeem to Sin not only againſt Scripture, but againſt Reaſon, not only by their Raillery, but by their manner of ſpreading it abroad.

In general, As all Detractors are Sinners, and perhaps culpable of thoſe very Faults they blame in others, are they not afraid that we ſhall apply to them, what the Apoſtle ſaid of the Heathen, *Wherefore, O Man, whoever thou art, that judgeſt another, thou art inexcuſable; for where-* Rom. 2. 1.

SECT. IX *in thou judgest another, thou condemnest thy self, for thou thy self dost the same things?*

If they are not subject to the same Vices, they are to others. So Jesus Christ may say to them, *Let him among you who is* John 8. 7. *without Sin, cast the first Stone*; and in Confusion they will be obliged to go away without saying any Thing, thereby tacitly owning their own Sins, and the Sting they feel for having accused their Neighbour. May we not say to them, as the converted Thief to his Companion, *Feares not thou* Luk 23. 40 *God, seeing we are in the same Condemnation?* Under the Law, GOD strongly recommended to the *Israelites*, Pity for Strangers and the Afflicted, because they Exod. 23. 9. themselves had been Strangers in *Ægypt*, and there suffer'd many Evils; so because we are all subject to the same moral Evil, namely Sin, we should be charitable one towards another.

Suppose the Detractor should have fewer Faults than the Detracted, Does that give him any Plea to detract? On the contrary, To whom is he indebted that he is not so great a Sinner? 'Tis to the Grace of GOD. Is this then any Reason for his Pride? No indeed: On the contrary, 'tis a Reason for him to bless the Lord for his Gifts, and to endeavour to make use of his Goodness for good Words, and holy Actions. 'Tis moreover

over a Motive not to detract, becauſe the more we have received, the more will be required of us, and the more ready ought we to be to that which is good; that ſo we may bring forth the Fruits which GOD juſtly expects from his Grace in us. In fine, the more ought we to conſider, that we ſtand only by Grace, and that if the Beſtower thereof ſhould take it away, we ſhould in a moment fall into the greateſt Exceſſes. Thus all theſe Conſiderations ſhould oblige us continually, when we hear theſe Sins ſpoken of in others, to which we are not ſubject, to thank God on the one Hand that we are not given up to them, and on the other, to be extreamly watchful, leſt we fall into Detraction. Tis a ſtrange Extravagancy of Men, that having ſo many Subjects here below to be humble, they ſhould not be ſo, altho' they know that the Saints who are with God & have ſo many Subjects for glorying in their Advantages, do not glory in them. Sect. IV. Luke Rev. 4

When I make uſe, either of the Sins to which Detractors are ſubject, with the reſt of the World, or of the Greatneſs of the Sin it ſelf, which they commit by detracting, to ſhew the Sin they commit, in evil ſpeaking, I do not thereby extenuate the real Faults of thoſe who are Detracted. Here we may ſay without Detraction, ſince we do not intereſt any one in particular herein, what

SECT. IX we say often speaking ill of two Persons at the same time, they are both in the wrong, these by sinning, those by divulging the Sin. Supposing he who is the Object of Detraction and he who spreads it abroad, are otherways equally Sinners, yet still it is certain that this last is more criminal than the other, because even in this Detraction he has sinned more than the other. Is it not then a great Piece of insolence, and a terrible Rashness to backbite Persons who are really better than ones self? Is it not an Aggravation, when in all Regards they who are detracted are better than the Detractor?

3. *MOTIVE.*

Another powerful Motive to shun Detraction is, That all Men are Brethren, and consequently are obliged to love each other in this relation. This Consequence is so just, natural and true, That I don't think any one will question it. The Principle from whence it is taken, is not less certain, That one and the same, and the first Man was the Father of all others. We are then all Branches from the same Stock, Streams from the same Fountain. Hence that saying of St. *Paul*; GOD *hath formed all Men of one Blood.* Hence the Prophet *Esaias* exhorted the *Jews* to Charity, because they who had need of Charity were

Acts 17 Isa. 58. 8.

of

of the same Flesh with those whose Duty it was to be charitable. Let me add, that all were formed after the Image of GOD, and are thereby Copies of the same original. Besides, Grace makes Men partakers of the same Benefits, and like Brethren who share among themselves the Goods which their Father leaves them. The same Blood has made them all, and the same Blood has redeemed them all. But now if we ought to love all Men as our Brethren, how can we treat them as Enemies by dishonouring them? SECT. IX

4th MOTIVE.

The Precept against Detraction is very easily practised. I don't treat here of that Act of Charity which Jesus Christ prescribed to the young Man, who enquired of him, *what he must do to inherit eternal Life*, and whom he ordered to *sell his whole Estate and distribute it among the Poor*. Neither do I here treat of laying down our temporal Life to procure eternal Life for our Brethren, according to the Example of our blessed Saviour, and the Command of St. *John*. All the Question is, to hold our Tongue; which we may easily do, and which will bring us no harm. You have perhaps often said to your self, "Had I been in *Adam*'s Place, I would not have transgressed the Commandment of GOD as he did, since Obedience to it was Mat. 19. 21. 1 Epist. 3. Chapter.

so

SECT. IX ſo eaſy. I pray, What will Obedience coſt you more now? Is it harder to refrain ſpeaking, than eating a Fruit? Moreover, 'Tis a Law which ſhould appear entirely agreable to us: For if it ſhelters others from our Flings and Detractions, will it not alſo ſhelter us from thoſe of others? Has not GOD forbid others to detract, as well as us? And doubtleſs ſome are thereby kept from ſaying to our Damage all that they might.

5th MOTIVE.

Nothing will preſerve our Reputation more than an abſtinence from this Vice. As is thus proved: Without repeating what was ſaid in the 6th Section, I ſay, that by our not Detracting from others, we give them no Occaſion to revenge themſelves on us by other Detractions on their Part, and to meaſure to us as we have meted to them. *He that diggeth a Ditch, ſhall fall thereinto, and he that rolleth a Stone, it will return upon him,* ſays *Solomon.* But if a Man do not dig a Ditch to cauſe his Neighbour to fall therein, and wound him, nor roll the Stone of Detraction againſt him, he is in no Danger of being wounded himſelf by falling into the Ditch he had not dug for his Neighbour, or by the Fall of the Stone he had rolled againſt him.

Prov: 26. 27.

2. There

2. There is no Perſon's Faults ſo much remarked as thoſe who take a Pleaſure in finding them in others; whereas we don't ſo much examine the Life of thoſe who do not thus ſcan the Conduct of other People; for it is very common to enter into an Examination of the Life of theſe Sorts of Perſons, who ſpeak of the Lives of others with as much Boldneſs and Confidence, as if they themſelves had obtained to perfect Holineſs. SECT. IX

3. I have ever heard thoſe commended who are not ſubject to Detraction, and truly they always have been eſteemed, and ever will be, while there remains any Reſpect and Love for Virtue.

4. When we have once began to detract from every Body, we loſe our Credit and all manner of Confidence among others. If at any Time we praiſe others, Men think we jeer and droll, and don't ſpeak ſeriouſly, and that the good we ſay of 'em is only Satyr. Thus Men don't believe us. Thus it is with Liars: Men don't believe 'em tho' they they talk ever ſo true.

Moreover our Reputation ought to be precious to us, not only for reaſons already mentioned, and not only becauſe it is profitable to us, but alſo becauſe it may be ſo with regard to our Neighbour. It cauſes our Advice for the good of particular Perſons or of the Publick to be better received

Sect. IX and our Exhortations to others to lead a good Life, to be the better followed. Thus our Concern for GOD's Glory and our Neighbour's Salvation, as well as our own Profit, ought to urge us to preserve our Honour, by refraining from Detraction.

6th MOTIVE.

Nothing will more effectually gain us not only the Esteem, but also the Good-Will of all the World, than to refrain from Detraction. As this raises us up Enemies, so refraining from Detraction procures us Friends. We naturally love those who will bear with our Failings & not discover them. This therefore procures us the Friendship of others, which must needs be advantageous to us.

'Tis true, there are Persons with whom we ought not to be too straitly linked, but there are none whom we ought to make our Enemies without necessity, and by our evil Carriage. Nothing hinders but that we may accept even the Services of a wicked Man, provided that he do no Man hurt, to do us a pleasure. And since there are none but what may help or hurt us, let us endeavour to give them only grounds to love us.

Here it must be added, that oftentimes Detraction does not bring any Profit and never any true Pleasure. They of whom we speak ill, may perhaps have found some

Pleasure

Pleaſure or Profit in the Evil they have done, but on a thouſand Occaſions, what good ariſes from being a Detractor! If we take any Pleaſure therein, it is troubled by a Fear that he whom we ſpeak ill of, will hear of it and be revenged on us. SECT. IX

As to the Profit of Detraction, we commonly loſe more by it than we gain. Or if we do gain any Thing by it, we violate that Precept of the Apoſtle, which forbids a Man to make his own Profit by the Loſs of another. And this Precept is a new Motive to refrain from Detraction. 1 Theſ. 4. 6.

7th MOTIVE.

When once we have began to cenſure every one, as Detractors ordinarily do, if it happen (as is common) that we become faulty in any Thing, the World won't pardon us in the leaſt Matter. This Motive is, I own, purely humane, but perhaps on this Account it will be more proper to make an Impreſſion on many Perſons; we become the Talk and Ridicule of all the World, and even of thoſe who have not much Propenſity to detract. All the World rejoice when they can cenſure thoſe who have cenſured all the World. In a Word, No one will ſhew us any Favour. What, ſay they, It becomes this Man indeed to ſpeak ill of every Body, he that has the very greateſt of Faults himſelf! O ſtrange, That ever the Man who detracts from all

the

SECT. IX the World, ſhould be guilty of ſuch Blunders!

8th *MOTIVE.*

The Dignity of our Tongue is a Motive which ſhould hinder us from defiling it by
Pſal. 57. 8 Detraction. *David* calls it his Glory. If it be our Glory, why ſhould we diſhonour it by making uſe of it to the diſhonour of our Neighbour?

Let us conſider, That the eternal Word was made Fleſh, to teach and redeem Men. And ſhould not this Benefit be a great Motive to Men not to profane their Speech, by detracting from thoſe for whom he took Fleſh on himſelf, and not to employ it in diſobeying the Commands which he came to give us againſt Detraction?

All the World owns, That our Nature has received a great Increaſe of Glory ſince the Son of GOD is united to it. And ſince the eternal Word has ſpake as other Men, their Speech has received a conſiderable Augmentation of Glory and Dignity, a Dignity which ſhould engage them not to defile a thing which GOD has made uſe of.

It was doubtleſs becauſe we were formed
1 Pet. 1. 16. after the Image of GOD, that St. *Peter* commands us to *be holy, as he is holy*; and it was becauſe GOD the Son was formed in our reſemblance, and is united to our Nature, that St. *Paul* commands us
1 Theſ. 1. 11. to be imitators of Jeſus Chriſt. Chriſt being

ing made like to us, it is needful that we become like to him. In a word, since he has done us the Honour to make himself in some sort equal with us, by conversing with us, and as equal with himself: 'Tis our Duty, our Interest and our Glory not to abuse his Favours by Detractions. SECT. IX

9th MOTIVE.

We may now endeavour to find in the Persons and Faults of our Neighbours, Reasons to refrain Detraction.

All Sinners in general are called Fools, in the divinely inspired Writings, because it is truly a very great Folly to hazard by our Sins the inestimable good Things of Heaven, for the short Pleasures of this Life. Therefore *Moses* reproaching the *Israelites* for their Sins and their Ingratitude, says to them, *O Foolish People and unwise, do you thus requite the Lord!* And this being laid down, Can we detract from Fools, without being a Fool one's self! Sinners are also compared to Beasts. St. *Peter* says of those who return to the Vices they had forsaken, That they are like the *Sow that was washed, which returns to her wallowing in the Mire; and like the Dog that returns to his vomit.* And must not he be almost a Brute, whose Mind and Tongue are busied about a Subject as mean and bruitish as Sin. Sinners are also in sacred Writ represented to us as blind Persons

Deut. 32. 6. See also Psal. 107. 17.

2 Pet. 2. 22. & 22.

Sect. IX ſons, whoſe Eyes the God of this World hath blinded. Now is there not in the divine Law an expreſs and particular Command againſt making the Blind to fall, becauſe his Miſery ought to move our Compaſſion and not our Malice? And this ſhould be a Motive to us, not to hurt theſe Perſons blind in their Minds, whoſe Condition ſhould much more excite our Pity than that of Perſons naturally blind, who are deprived only of the ſight of their bodily Eyes: becauſe in reality the Miſery of the firſt is vaſtly greater than that of the laſt. Bodily Blindneſs deprives us only of ſome ſenſual Pleaſures, and that no longer than the ſhort ſpace of this Life. But Blindneſs of Mind, deprives Men of the ſight of GOD himſelf, and of the Enjoyment of the only Good. The one deprives Men of ſome Pleaſure, but brings no poſitive Evils; whereas the other caſts Sinners into the dreadful Abyſs of Miſeries & Pains. Their own Sins then do puniſh them enough, without our endeavouring to contribute here below to their Pains. Is it not horrible Barbarity to afflict thoſe who deſerve all our Help and Compaſſion.

10th MOTIVE.

Another Motive may be taken from the Nature of the Evil cauſed by Detraction, namely the Loſs of the Reputation of thoſe who are detracted, a Reputation which beſide that

that it is very precious, is also very easily lost and ruined. 'Tis like the Eye, the finest, but withal the most tender and sensible Part of the Body. And besides, it is also a very great Difficulty, yea many Times an Impossibility to repair this Evil, when we cause it, and these are certainly very strong Reasons to hinder us from detracting. SECT. IX

11th MOTIVE.

If we enter a little into particulars, we shall see in many of those we speak ill of, something that might make us excuse their Imperfections and Sins, and consequently a Motive against Detraction. If we thoroughly examine the matter, we shall know, That certain Prejudices imprinted on them from their Infancy, a bad Education or want of Education, weakness of Mind, Inadvertence, extraordinary violence of a Temptation, are the Causes of their Sins, Causes which should lead us surely to mourn over them with more Reason than to detract from and blame them.

With regard to their Persons also, if they are very vicious, they don't deserve to be entirely spoken of, unless it be to Persons who may reduce them to their Duty by the Knowledge of their Vices. If they have as many Vertues as Faults, their good Qualities should make us excuse and pardon their bad ones, and with still greater Rea-

SECT. IX

son, if their Perfections do surpass their Imperfections and Defects. Above all, if these Defects are small, we can't without Injustice make them ridiculous before Men, for so small things, and cause them to lose the Fruit of their many good Actions, by relating one or two bad Actions they have committed. In fine, We ought to consider even those who seem to us the most vicious, may be converted and become the Children of GOD; and that perhaps He has already prepared them to be Vessels of his Mercy, Patterns of Virtue, Objects of his Favour, and Possessors of his Glory: Which shews that it would be a great Sin to be so rigorous to those to whom GOD will be so favourable. How dare we discover those Sins which JesusChrist has covered with the Robes of his Righteousness? We may indeed always speak Evil of Sin. It is always Evil and never changes it's Nature. It is not so with Sinners whom Grace may change and convert. As we ought not to love Vice because we love the Person in whom it is, so we ought not to hate the Vicious because we hate their Vices. We may in our Hearts separate the Sick Person and the Disease. We may hate the Disease without hating the sick Man also.

12th MOTIVE.

If we do not reveal the Faults of our Neighbours,

Neighbours, this Abſtinence will ſerve greatly for our Abſolution before the dread Tribunal of GOD. This St. *Peter* aſſures us of, by ſaying, that *Love covers a multitude of Sins.* Yes indeed, This Love whereby we caſt a Vail of ſilence over the Sins of our Brethren, on Earth, covers our's before GOD, who will pardon them to us as we have pardoned others: whereas *he who has ſhewed no Mercy, ſhall have Judgment without Mercy.* Who wou'd refuſe to give ſomething to a poor Man, eſpecially if what he gave did not incommode himſelf? Who then would refuſe ſilence which coſts nothing, to Perſons to whom thereby we many times do greater Pleaſure, than if we gave them vaſt Sums of Money?

SECT. IX.

1 Pet. 4. 8.

Jam. 2. 13.

Let us conſider, that we ſhall be juſtified or condemned by our Words, and that by them we ſhall alſo be judged as well as by our Actions: A Man that knows that he ſhall be judged according to what he ſhall ſay before his Judge, thinks as long as he can how he ſhall ſpeak ſo as to utter nothing that may be laid hold of againſt him. How wiſe, wary and judicious ought Chriſtians then to be in their Words, which GOD hears and knows? and eſpecially ſince they know not the Time of their particular, any more than that of the general Judgment; and above all, let them think on

Mat. 12. 37.

Sect. IX the Certainty and Horror of those Pains which they will suffer throughout Eternity, if when they have been weighed in the Ballance of GOD's Justice, they are found
Dan. 5.27. light, like *Belshazzar*. It was by such a Motive as this, even by the Consideration of the Destruction and End of the World, which should precede the universal Judg-
2 Pet. 3. 11. ment, that St. *Peter* so justly said, *Since then all these Things shall be dissolved, what manner of Persons ought ye to be in all holy Conversation and Godliness!* If we should not live till that Time, which shall put an End to Time, and wherein the Universe shall be consumed, without consuming Men, who shall then be only changed: Our Bodies will be dissolved by Death, and 'tis this Death which should hinder us from detracting. What Service will it then be to us, that we have passed for agreable Raillers, and have satisfied our Self-love or our Hatred, if we must after that begin an everlasting Repentance for our having so done?

13*th* MOTIVE.

He who by his Respect and Gratitude to GOD, and thro' Love to his Neighbour can abstain from Detraction, may also abstain from offending GOD by other Discourses of his. If he can keep his Tongue from detracting he may also hinder it from uttering any other Words which are contrary to GOD's Orders

ders, as filthy Words, rash Oaths, &c. Now if he can abstain from all this, and *offend not in Words*, he is *a perfect Man*, says St. *James*, *and can govern the whole Body*. Thus to refrain Detracting, is a short way to Sanctification, and thereby to Salvation. SECT. IX. Jam. 3. 2.

You will perhaps say, That this wou'd be to attempt an Impossibility, which a wise Man will not, since this same Apostle assures us, that *no Man can tame the Tongue*, inasmuch as it is an Evil that cannot be curbed.

I answer, If it be impossible, why does GOD command it then in so many Places, and why does he threaten those with Hell, who do not repress their Tongue? Verily, He is too just, too good and too wise to command Men impossibilities. Suppose nevertheless that this Impossibility is lodged in the Corruption of Man, he may & ought to demand of GOD that Grace & Wisdom which he bestows liberally on all those who ask it of him with Faith. Every thing is then possible to a Man when he is filled with the Gifts of GOD, to whom all things are possible. 2 Cor. 12. 10.

But moreover, I am perswaded, That when the Apostle says, *No Man can bridle the Tongue*, it must be understood of the Tongue of another Man which is not in our Power; and not of our own Tongue

SECT. IX

which we can dispose of. To make use of St. *James's* Expressions, If a Man is able to govern and tame Horses, by putting Bits into their Mouth; and if all manner of Beasts and Fowls and creeping Things have been tamed and are tamed by Man; if being unable to make the Sea solid, he has invented the use of Ships to go beyond Sea, and has found out the Secret to govern great Vessels with a little Helm; and if what he can't do by Force he can by Cunning; why if he uses as strong Endeavours to subdue his Tongue, may he not also succeed as well in this as in other Things which are without him? I see no Reason why he mayn't. So that by this impossibilty of subduing the Tongue must be understood, that of other Men, which we can't keep in subjection, because it is not at our Disposal, and can't come under our Power as may the other Things just mentioned.

14*th MOTIVE.*

In fine, If famous and pious Examples may serve as Motives to imitate those who have furnished them, we have Examples of Persons illustrious for their Piety, who did not detract, whose Example should estrange this Sin to us.

In Truth, As Non-Detraction, (if you'l allow the Term) is not so much a Virtue as an Abstinence from a Vice, or at furthest

theſt a negative Virtue, which conſiſts not so much in ſpeaking and doing, as in being ſilent, and in ſuppreſſing the Motion of the Tongue, we cannot produce a great number of Examples of Perſons who are in Scripture recommended to us, for not detracting. SECT. IX

Nevertheleſs 'tis from the ſilence of the Scripture on this matter, that we draw a Proof to ſhew, that a vaſt Number of holy Perſons have been exempt from Detraction. For ſince the Scripture ſets forth ſo many good Perſons who have been injured and deſpiſed, without revenging theſe Inſults in the moſt moderate way poſſible, even by Detractions againſt their particular Enemies; this is a Mark that they were not ſubject to this Vice. 2. By ſhewing us that they were free from thoſe Paſſions which produce Detraction, it ſufficiently ſhews that they were free from the Vice it ſelf. 3 By ſhewing that they had the quite oppoſite Virtues, as Patience and Meekneſs, like that of *Moſes*; it appears alſo that they were not given to this Vice. 4. Add to this, that it tells us in particular, as has been already remarked, That *Joſeph*, being a juſt Man, would have put away *Mary* ſecretly, for fear of defaming her.

St. *Luke* gives us a moſt certain Proof that the firſt Chriſtians were not Detractors, when he ſays, That *the Multitude of thoſe* Acts 4. 32.

SECT. IX *that believed, were of one Heart and of one Soul.* How could this faithful Historian say this, if they had been given to Detraction, which breaks the Bands of Concord among the nearest Persons? The Love they had for each other was so great, that the Heathen cou'd not imagine, how they could love one another so tenderly, without making use of Love-Potions, as we learn from ecclesiastical Historians. They were then very far from hurting each other reciprocally, which is the Character of Detraction, which is as common in our Days, as it was rare in theirs. Who were in the right, they or we, who were in the wrong we or they? let the Scripture be the Judge, and put an End to our Difference. But even to appeal to that, is to give up the Cause to them. Happy Times of that new Church! An Image of Heaven upon Earth, and of that heavenly *Jerusalem* in the Church on the earthly *Jerusalem*! Happy Times, when they who were Members of the Church, liv'd already as Citizens of Heaven; when their Manners were as conformable to the Laws of Jesus Christ, as they themselves were near the Days of his Flesh! And what, because we are more distant, must we be more criminal! Have we not all the same Precepts in our hands? Is not Christ himself still held forth and crucified before us, in the Account the Evangelists give of his Life & Death. The

The Example even of many of the *Pagans*, who have condemned Detraction, should furnish us with another Motive to avoid it. What a Shame is this to us, that Persons who had no other Help than the Light of Nature, should appear to have more noble and right Sentiments than we, who have besides our natural Light, a Revelation so pure and so extensive! Nevertheless, to hear some among them, and the greatest part of Christians, one wou'd be ready to say, that we were Pagans, they were Christians. How unhappy for these, that the other shall rise up in Judgment against them and condemn them! Mat. 12. 41 SECT. IX

I acknowledge. That the generality of the Pagan World was extreamly addicted to Detraction, and that they made a God thereof under the Name of *Momus* * ; but is not this still a pressing Motive not to detract? Can we faultlesly and without blushing, imitate those who according to St. *Paul, were in Darkness, without GOD, and without hope in the World*!

* The *Pagans* represented him in perpetual Idleness, and said, That being chosen an Arbitrator and Judge between *Jupiter, Minerva,* and *Vulcan,* He blam'd them all Three.

SECT. IX

The Uses *of this Section.*

THE Motives mentioned may be of Use to all Persons: Those who love Reputation, Those who need the Help of another, Those who wou'd gain the Good-Will of Men, Those who wou'd taste the good Things of Heaven, may find in what has been said, Motives to refrain Detraction. And so may those who love to undertake only easy Things, and whose success is infallible, it being equally easy and possible to refrain Backbiting our Neighbour. Here likewise may be found all that is profitable, agreeable and delightful to Men.

Moreover, These Motives, which are so proper to take Effect upon the Heart; and the Knowledge of these Motives, which is so capable of enlightning the Mind, will render those inexcusable who will not change their Conduct. Do not then any longer detract from others and tell them when Occasion shall present. *Sirs, ye are* Acts 7.26. *Brethren; Why do ye wrong one to another?*

SECTION

SECTION X.

Containing many Duties and Counsels concerning Detraction.

IT will be to little purpose to know the Causes, the Nature, the Effects, the Malignity of an Evil, in order to cure it, if we do not use the Remedies needful to drive away the Evil. So it will be of very little Profit to be informed of the Quality, the Nature the Sources, and the Degrees of Detraction, in order to cure this Corruption, if we should not give those who are filled with this mortal Venom, the Remedies necessary to drive it away. In this last Section therefore we shall give these wholesome Medicines under the Name of Duties and Counsels, 1. To those who intend to avoid the Sin of Detraction. 2. To those who are fallen thereinto. 3. To those who hear Detraction. 4. To those who are spoken against.

ARTICLE I.

Duties and Counsels to those who desire to avoid Detraction.

NOT to repeat here the various Counsels we have given in the Course of this

Sect. X. this Treatiſe, eſpecially in the Uſes of each Section, ſuch as is that of having our Eyes fixt rather on the good Qualities of a Man, than upon his bad Qualities, &c. I begin with ſaying that we ought to lay aſide all thoſe Paſſions and Defects which are the Cauſes and Sources of Detraction. With this Precaution you cannot fail of Succeſs in extirpating it. By cutting the Root of a Tree, the Tree muſt needs fall of it ſelf. By taking away the Cauſe, we take away the Effect at the ſame Time: This is evident.

We muſt often and ſtrongly repreſent to our ſelves, how Detraction is a very great Sin, its fatal Effects and the powerful Motives which ſhould turn us therefrom. Certain I am, we ſhould therein find Reaſons ſo ſtrong againſt Detraction, that we ſhould not be in a ſuſpence about doing for others, what we wou'd that they ſhould do for us.

After this let us accuſtom our ſelves, to give our utmoſt Application to the work of our Salvation, and to make uſe of all the Time which ſo important a Thing demands; ſo important that it is properly the only Thing important for us. If we do thi, we ſhall have neither Time nor Will for Detraction: We ſhall no more find Time therefor, ſeeing the Inſtruction we owe to our ſelves, the Care we are obliged to take

not

not to fall into numberleſs Sins *which ſo eaſily beſet us*; and the Time it ſelf which demands the Practice of the Virtues commanded us, will leave us no leiſure to detract from others. This is ſo true, that the Time for Prayer alone may take up all our Life Time, according to that Exhortation of the Apoſtle of the Gentiles, *Pray without Ceaſing*. Wou'd we employ that Time which we ſpend in prying into and finding out the Defects of others, in correcting our own and examining our ſelves, we ſhould acknowledge, that this Duty requires ſo much Time that there would be none left for cenſuring the Actions of other Men. SECT. X. Heb. 12. 1. 1 Theſ. 5.

Some complain, that they have no leiſure to read GOD's Word in private, and to diſcharge the other Duties of Piety; but this Complaint wou'd ceaſe if we did employ for this End, the Time which we ſpend in Words and Viſits of Detraction. When we are thus diſtracted and involved in the Affairs of others, we have no Time for to think of our own. Above all, inſtead of diſcourſing to the Diſadvantage of our Neighbours, we might diſcourſe ſo as to be advantageous to our ſelves, even by bleſſing and praiſing GOD with our Mouth. And truly, to keep us from detracting, there is no need of cutting out our Tongue, as ſome Chriſtians have done, for fear leſt the Strength

of

SECT. X. of the Temptations they endured for the Name of Jesus Christ, should oblige them to deny him with their Mouth. Here the Temptation is not so strong, and moreover inasmuch as we may make our Tongue serve to glorify GOD, we should do our selves a great Injury to deprive our selves of this Help. And further we may remark, that our Lord well says, that if our Eye, our right Hand, our Foot offends us, it is our Duty to pluck it out, to cut it off; but he says no such thing of the Tongue, because that perhaps the other Members do not contribute so much to the Glory of our Father and Creator, as we may bless him with this.

Matth. 5. 29. 30.

Moreover, If we apply our selves to the Things of the Kingdom of Heaven as we ought, we shall have no Will for Detraction, because that in this Study we shall find a thousand Instructions and Motives which may turn us therefrom.

As the Itch of Talking is not only one of the Sources of Detraction, but inasmuch as Detraction it self is many Times only a Babling, the Means of abstaining therefrom will be to talk little. The Apostle also commands us to be slow to speak. *Job* made a Covenant with his Eyes, that he might not Sin by their means, so we should make a Covenant with our Tongue, that we offend not GOD by that. 'Twas for this

Rom. 12.

Job 31. 1.

this that the Pſalmiſt ſaid, He would keep his Mouth with a Bridle. This Care is ſo neceſſary even for our temporal Benefit, that the Heathen owned this Advantage of ſilence. *Cato* † ſaid, that the Prime and principal Virtue was to rule the Tongue, And that he is next to GOD, *who knows how to be rationally ſilent.* Another * excellently ſaid, *that he who knows not how to be ſilent, knows not how to ſpeak.* Indeed we muſt have ſome Reaſons to talk, but there is no need of any for our ſilence. SECT. X. Pſal. 39. 1.

The Time we allow for ſilence, or if you pleaſe, the Time which ſilence allows us, may be very profitable to us by reflecting on the weighty Reaſons we have to refrain Detraction. Thus I wou'd adviſe thoſe who are tempted to detract, only to think on that Precept of the Apoſtle *Paul, Speak Evil of no Man.* As we know very well, that this Command was given by Inſpiration of a GOD who will ſeverely puniſh them who break his Laws; This tho't alone may make us hate and abhor Detraction.

And altho' we ought to ſpeak with reſerve, yet we may ſpeak with an open and free Air, which carries with it neither Auſterity nor Pedantry.

---

† Virtutem primam eſſe puta compeſcere Linguam ; *Cato.*

* Proximus ille Deo, qui ſcit ratione tacere.

SECT. X. My farther advise is, That we make it a Duty to weep over Sinners, to be grieved for the Faults they commit, and not to make them the Subject of our Pastime and Diversion, as is but too common. If we consider the Zeal we ought to have for GOD's Glory, and the Love we owe our Neighbours, there is nothing more capable of raising our Compassion towards them, and of moving our Bowels with Grief, than to see how they are plunging themselves into eternal Miseries by their sinful ways. 'Twas on this Account that the Royal Prophet said in *Psal.* 119. 53. That *Floods of Tears ran down his Eyes, when he saw that Men kept not God's Law.* Hence it was that *Lot's* righteous Soul was afflicted, when he considered the Crimes of *Sodom.* Alas! Were we of the same Sentiments, we should not take so much pleasure and delight in detracting our selves, or in hearing others detract. Ground for rejoicing is, when we see Persons observe GOD's Commandments, in the observation whereof true Wisdom consists. Hence that of *Solomon*, *My Son if thine Heart be wise, my Heart shall rejoice, even mine.*

Luk 19 41.

Pro 23. 15.

We should avoid having a strict Commerce with Detractors, inasmuch as bad Company is very apt to corrupt these good Sentiments in us. We must keep them

at

at a Distance from us or our selves at a Distance from them. Thus did *David* as he protests in *Psal.* 101. This also is an apostolical Precept as has been observed in Section 4 Sect. X.

I don't mean but that we may frequent their Company if we believe that by conversing with them we may convert them from this Sin. So that as long as we hope to succeed herein, we ought to speak to them and warn them thereof, but we must forsake them when we can expect nothing from them. Even as Physicians do, who visit a sick Man while there is any likelihood of his Recovery, but leave him when they judge that humane Remedies will be ineffectual on him, and we must imitate those who go to see Persons ill of the Plague, who guard themselves with Preservatives against the contagious Evil, lest while they try to help others, they destroy themselves with them.

Moreover, If we ought on a thousand Occasions to avoid the Company of Detractors, the Society of wise and pious Persons may be a great help to us, to hinder us from Detracting, according to that Maxim of the wise Man, *He that walketh with the wise shall be wise.* Pro. 13.

Another Counsel may be this, To think that GOD beholds all things and will call us to a very strict Account. Did we busy

SECT. X. our selves on this Tho't, How efficacious wou'd it be to make us hate Detraction! Wou'd we do before the King of Kings what he has expressly forbidden! When the most disobedient in the World will be careful at least to obey an earthly King's Orders, while in his Presence. We don't urge this Article because the Punishment which GOD will inflict on Detractors, and which we have alledged as a Motive to abstain from Detraction, suppoſes the Knowledge he has of all our Words.

We must shew that we think on GOD
Prov. 16. 1 by praying to him for Grace not to fall into this Sin, since our Tongue is in his Power. And also, that so we may always
Eph. 4. 15. follow Truth with Charity. Let us say
Psal. 141. 3. to him, *Set a Watch, O Lord, before my Mouth, keep the door of my Lips: That so the Words of our Mouths and the Me-*
Psal. 19. *ditation of our Hearts may be acceptable in his Sight.* And in fine, That in Paradice we may sing forth that Hymn of Triumph, *Now is come Salvation and*
Rev. 12. 10. *Strength, and the Kingdom of our GOD, and the Power of his Christ: for the accuser of our Brethren is cast down, which accused them before our GOD Day and Night.*

In a Word, we ought to be extremely on our Watch not to sin by Detracting, and thereby rendring the Grace of GOD of

no

no Fruit and Effect; and this so much the more as we may detract so many Ways and have so many Occasions and Temptations to do it. Thus we ought to engage in what *David* said, *I will look well to my Ways, that I offend not with my Tongue.* [Psal. 39.] SECT. X.

ARTICLE II.

The Duties of those who are fallen into Detraction.

IN the foregoing Article we considered Detraction, as a Sin which we might fall into, in this we shall consider it as already committed. In the one I have shewn what must be our Practice in order to avoid it; here I shall shew what must be done to correct it, to remedy it as much as possible and render it as light as may be. Not but that all which we have said in the other Article may suit this: For the same Advices we have already given, are very necessary for those who have actually detracted. But as to these last, something farther is really necessary.

Their first Duty is to repent of their Detractions and to forsake them. All the World own this Condition to be absolutely necessary in order to obtain the Pardon

SECT. X. of their Sins from GOD. ---- Detraction being a Sin, Repentance is then absolutely necessary therefor.

And since Sorrow is a Part of Repentance, they who have spake ill of others, must necessarily be now afflicted therefor.

Jam. 4. 9. O Detractors, *Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: Let your Laughter be turned to Mourning, and your Joy to Heaviness.*

And when we have quitted this Sin, we ought afterwards to act quite contrary, and to repair the Injury we have done our Neighbour by defaming him. I know this Injury is in a sense, irreparable, since we cannot make what has been said, be unsaid, and what has been written, be unwritten. Nevertheless if when we have blamed a Person on Account of some particular Facts, we shew, that on the other Hand he has Virtues which deserve our Praises, this a little diminisheth the ill Idea we had formerly given of him.

If there be any Thing opposite to Detraction, it is doubtless the Praise we give to the good Actions of our Neighbours, and the mentioning of these Actions. Perhaps we shan't succeed so as to make the Persons before whom we formerly detracted, believe the Good we say of those who were once the Objects of our Detraction, but however this be, it is our Duty to try this way and to endeavour to make it succeed,

for

for it is the only way that can be made use of, and the most proper in this Design. Sect. X.

In fine, it is their Duty to get profit to themselves by the Faults which they have condemned in others. That is to say, if they have decryed them for their Avarice and Debauchery, they are to beware that they themselves be not covetous and debauched. Nothing could be more proper to correct us, than this Knowledge of the Faults and Sins of another, and that for this Reason. Vice in another appears to us in all its most filthy Colours, & most hideous Forms. It then appears to us entirely frightful, and nothing in my Opinion is more proper to make us hate it. *Thales* said very well hereupon, *That the Way to live virtuously is to avoid what we find Evil in others.*

ARTICLE *III.*

The Duty of those in Presence of whom People have Detracted.

THE Number of Persons who hear Detraction, is not less than of those who do detract: Since what makes Detraction, is, the Discovering our Neighbour's Defects to others who hearken to us. So we shall give some Rules to these, and shew them their Duty.

Sect. X. Their first Duty is to take the Part of the Absent and to excuse them as far as possible. This is one of the principal Duties of Charity: and many times they who are content to remain Neuters, become guilty of Detraction. Here that Maxim
Luk. 11. 23. may be applied, *He that is not for me is against me.* When therefore you hear a Man ill spoken of, take his Part, and if you cannot clear him of what he is accused of, make known his good Qualities. This is so much the more easy as I believe there are none but what have some good Qualities. Relate all that you know commendable in that Person, or all that you have heard others praise him for. This is so much the more just, as there is no Person how honest and good soever he be, but would appear a Monster, if we should tell of all that is bad in him, without relating also what is good in the same. Take the Apostles themselves; you will see them proud, ambitious, infatuated with a temporal Kingdom of the Miseries, in which every one expected the highest Places: You will see them either forsaking or denying their divine Master, and quarrelling one with the other. So that if you do not cast your Eye on the other side to admire their Zeal and a thousand other Virtues which gained
2 Tim. 4. 8. them the *Crown of Righteousness*, they will seem to you Persons not only unworthy

of

of the Apoſtleſhip but even of the Name of Chriſtians. SECT. X.

If we know no Good to ſay of Perſons, we muſt not poſitively excuſe them. This would be both ridiculous and impoſſible. But we muſt excuſe them by Judgments of Charity, without getting too much engaged. Perhaps, we may ſay to Detractors, He you are ſpeaking of, had no Deſign to carry matters ſo far, and perhaps the Report that runs abroad is not very well grounded, *&c.* We muſt at leaſt interpret the Evil we hear related, in the beſt way we can, and give it the moſt favourable Conſtruction it will bear. Thus St. *Auſtin* acted, when he wou'd excuſe *Tertullian*, for ſaying that GOD is corporeal: In endeavouring to clear him of this Error, He ſaid, That *Tertullian*, by the Term of Body, only meant a Subſtance; which takes away the Hereſy, it being certain that GOD is a Subſtance, tho' not a bodily one.

In fine, We ſhould endeavour to diminiſh the enormity of ſome Crimes, by ſhewing that many Circumſtances, which attend thoſe who have committed them, deſerve to be weighed, and ſhould rather induce us to abſolve them, or at leaſt not to condemn them with ſo much rigour.

We muſt above all, powerfully defend thoſe whoſe Crime is not well proved, and ſhew that there is as much reaſon to diſ-

Sect. X. credit what is said to the disadvantage of the absent, as to believe it, and consequently we must suspend our Judgment or give it in on the charitable side. Nevertheless in excusing our Neighbour, we must never deviate from the following Rules:

1. We are not to lye to excuse any one whatever. We must never do Evil that Good may come of it. Lies officious for others, are damnable to those who speak them.

2. We are not to excuse one Fault by another, as to excuse Covetousness in one Man because of the meanness of his Soul: Luxury in another because of his Vanity.

3. We are not to excuse one Man by accusing another. There are sometimes Occasions wherein we may shew that neither the Accuser nor Accused have done Wrong. For Instance, the Physognomist who accused *Socrates* of being brutish, given to Drunkenness and Unchastity, had reason therefor, because such was his natural Disposition. His Disciples, who on the contrary said he was not so, had reason also on their side, because he had forsaken those Vices. And this is of Importance to be observed to others on many Occasions in order to justify both the one and the other: For there are every Day a thousand Misunderstandings of this sort, which might be so adjusted and cleared up.

If we can't excuſe the abſent who are ſpo- Sect. X.
ken ill of, we muſt break off the Conver-
ſation from Detraction. Here we muſt make uſe of our Judgment, and our Penetration and ſhew as much Wit in turning the Courſe of Detraction, as others ſhew in detracting finely. If we are alone with a Perſon who in his Diſcourſe with us detracts from another, we are with Moderation to make him perceive the wrong he is in, in detracting. But if we are in a Company, I don't adviſe to ſuch a Thing. Then to reprove Detractors openly would be detracting one's ſelf. We muſt wait for a more favourable Occaſion. We ſhould then rather turn the Converſation on Matters of Piety or Wit, or at leaſt of indifferent Nature; which is eaſy for Perſons who have either Piety or Wit, or any Sway in the World, with reference to their Birth or their Employment.

If all theſe Ways won't do, we muſt leave the Company, that ſo we may not have the Mortification to hear GOD offended, or may not be tempted to detract our ſelves, or ſhew that theſe Diſcourſes diſpleaſe us becauſe we think there is Evil in them. If ſtill we are with Perſons whom we can't well get diſ-engaged from, we muſt then keep a profound Silence, all the Time they are detracting, and as ſoon as the Converſation turns upon Matters of indifferent Nature we muſt diſcourſe as others;

Sect. X. others: which will easily shew that we kept silence, only because we did not love to detract, and this will be a Lesson to others. What is to be done after this, in order to strike as much as may be at the very Bottom of Detraction, is not to hearken favourably to those who wou'd spread Detraction. If we shew more Discontent than Pleasure in hearing Detractors, they will soon cease detracting. "If Informers "perceive that we have more Aversion for "them than for those whom they accuse; "they will soon break themselves of this "evil Custom, and will reform this Sin; "and after this they will hearken to us, "and we shall become their Saviours, and "they will call us their Benefactors, says "St. *Chrysostom.*" And this we are obliged to do, since to do otherwise is to second Detractors, to favour them, and consequently to Sin: Which made one of the Ancients say, "That Detractors serve the Devil with their Mouths, as their Hearers, do with their Ears."

If we can do no better, Let us make as tho' we did not mind what they say; they will know thereby, that at least we have much Indifference for their Discourse. The Conduct of *Constantine* the great, deserves to be here remarked and imitated. Many of the Bishops having presented to this Prince, Memorials containing reciprocal Complaints

Complaints of each other, and he being plagued almoſt every Day with Accuſations of this ſort, he referred them all to a certain Day; and when the Day came, he ſaid to them, "All theſe Complaints "ſhall be judged in the laſt Day, by the "common Judge of all Men. It does not "belong to me to take Notice of them; "to me, who am but a Man; ſince the "Accuſers and the Accuſed are Biſhops, who ought to do nothing that "ſubmits them to other's Judgment. "Let us then imitate the Mercy of GOD, "in pardoning one another, and renouncing "all theſe Accuſations. Let us agree in "examining Queſtions of Faith for which "we are now aſſembled". And having ſaid this, he order'd all the Complaints to be caſt into the Fire. Thus when we hear Detractors, we ſhould ſay to them, Let us leave it to GOD & to the Magiſtrates whom he has eſtabliſhed, to judge and to condemn Men. As for us who are private Perſons, 'tis none of our Buſineſs. Let us imitate the Mercy of GOD towards all Men, and let us agree to examine our own Conſciences, to bleſs the Lord, and to diſcourſe on Matters of Faith, without ever diſcovering Accuſations injurious to our Neighbour. If we have not always Occaſions to ſpeak after this manner, we have at leaſt to think and act thus. We ought even with Pleaſure

Sect. X.

Sozomen lib. 1. ch. 17.

Sect. X. ſure to forget what was ſaid in our Preſence againſt any one. We ought not eaſily to believe all the Ill that is ſaid of a Man, which is another Rule to be obſerved by thoſe who hear Detraction. We muſt then remember, that we have a thouſand Times heard Falſities ſpread abroad concerning our Neighbour, and even perhaps we our ſelves have been ſometimes ſlander'd. That thus it is very poſſible, that what is ſaid may be likewiſe falſe, at leaſt with regard to ſome Circumſtances: And this ſhould make Perſons very backward to believe and relate what they hear ſpoken. At leaſt we ought thro' Wiſdom and Charity to do what the Law of GOD commands, and what earthly Tribunals obſerve thro' Juſtice, namely not to condemn a Man but by the Mouth of two or three unexceptionable Witneſſes. And truly we believe eaſily the Evil which is ſpoken of others, but becauſe we are conſcious that our ſelves are capable of committing the ſame Faults, and are corrupt enough for that.

But ſuppoſing at preſent here, that we are very certain, and have no room to doubt, but that the Evil ſaid of our Neighbour is very true, our Duty is to go and tell him of his Faults and his Vices, which perhaps he himſelf is utterly ignorant of. We are to ſhew him the Wrong which

they

they do to his Reputation and his Intereſts, and eſpecially the Danger which he expoſes himſelf to, of ſinking eternally into Hell. SECT. X.

This is a Duty which all Men in general are obliged to practiſe towards each other, according to Scripture Rule. *My Brethren*, ſays St. *Paul*, *If a Man be overtaken in a Fault, reſtore ſuch an One in the Spirit of Meekneſs. Exhort one another daily while it is called to Day, leſt any of you be hardned thro' the Deceitfulneſs of Sin. Let us conſider one another to provoke unto Love & good Works.* Gal. 6. 1. Heb. 3. 13. Heb. 10. 24

If we read thoſe Paſſages attentively and conſider what goes before and what follows, we ſhall ſee that the Apoſtle is here treating of thoſe Remonſtrances, which particular Perſons ſhould make to each other about their Conduct. Let us not then ſay, That they regard only publick Perſons, as for Inſtance, *Paſtors*. For in Truth, Juſtice requires this of the latter, but Charity requires it of *All Men*. Don't then leave this officious Care to Paſtors only; doubtleſs you wou'd hardly be willing that they ſhould go to Heaven for you. There are even many Occaſions where particular Perſons are more proper to reprove a Man lovingly, than for his Paſtors to do it; againſt whom there are a thouſand Perſons ſo prejudiced, that they wou'd ſay, they did it only for Faſhion's ſake, and not thro' any Love

they

SECT. X. they bore them; or that we were to hearken to them in the Pulpit, or at the Point of Death, and not at any other Time. Moreover, Ministers don't know all Sinners nor all their Sins: and for many other Reasons they may not succeed so well in this matter as others.

They who wou'd fulfill this Duty, must observe some Precautions, and follow some Rules, which we shall mention.

1. The *First* is to see to it, that they are exempt from gross Faults, and especially from those which they blame in others. They must get rid of 'em if they are subject to 'em, as much as possibly they can, that so they may be in a Capacity to exhort others. They must take the Beam out of their own Eye, before they pretend to take the Mote out of their Neighbour's. We must be converted before we can exhort Sinners to Repentance, according to that Command of our Lord to *Peter*, *When thou shalt be converted, strengthen thy Brethren.* But especially we must not have spoken ill of them before. How can they take our Advice well, if we shew our selves their Enemies by defaming them? How can they think that it is Love which guides our Steps towards them, if they see that we fail in our Regards to them on many other Occasions? How then can our Instructions be profitable to them?

Luke 22.

2. A

2. A *second* Precaution is, to act with a great deal of meekneſs, prudence and circumſpection, that ſo our Reproofs and Exhortations may have an happy Succeſs: What I ſay is founded not only in the Scripture; but alſo on this Conſideration, that nothing grieves Men more, than to know that their Defects are known and blamed, and to ſee that they are deſpiſed for them. We muſt then make uſe of all our Induſtry and all our Zeal in endeavouring to diminiſh that which gives our Neighbour ſo much uneaſineſs in Reproofs. We muſt ſometimes grieve with him, ſometimes lovingly ſet forth the wrong his Sin does him, ſometimes praiſe thoſe good Actions in him, which he has formerly done. We muſt do our utmoſt to find out his Temper, that ſo we may in ſome meaſure conform our Diſcourſe thereto. We ſhould make him ſee, and endeavour to perſwade him, that it is neither Pride nor any other evil Principle; but only a Deſire of his Converſion, which makes us talk ſo freely to him of the Irregularities in his Conduct. We ſhould aſſure him that in his Turn, on his Part, we ſhould receive the Counſels he may give us, with Humility and a tractable Temper. We ſhould uſe all Sorts of Means to ſweeten this charitable Medicine, that ſo when it does not appear ſo diſtaſtful he may take it more eaſily. SECT. X.

3. A

SECT. X. 3. A *third* Precaution to be observe is, not to name the Persons who have spoken of our Neighbour's Defects, whom we are now censuring, lest we set them together by the Ears.

4. *Lastly*, We are to pray to GOD to convert both the Detractors and Detracted, and to increat him to pardon them both. This is an essential Part of Charity. Hence Chap. 5. St. *James* requires them to *pray for one another*. And St. *John* requires us to pray 1 Joh. ch. 5. for all sorts of Sinners, except those who *Sin unto Death*, that is, against the Holy Spirit, which Sin being at present, always or for the most part, unknown, it follows, that we are to pray for the whole World.

ARTICLE IV.

The Duties of those who are spoken ill of.

AS to what regards this Sin, all the World is *active* or *passive* therein. I speak now of these latter.

Their *first* Duty is to pardon those who have detracted from them, and not to will Eph. 4. or do any Evil to them therefor. St. *Paul* truly requires that in all sorts of Cases, we should pardon, others as Christ has pardoned us. Particularly, we ought not to

detract

detract from those who have formerly detracted from us. Hence that saying of S. *Peter*, *Be ye all of one Mind, having Compassion one towards another. Love as Brethren, be pitiful, be courteous. Not rendring evil for evil, or railing for railing, but contrarywise, Blessing; Knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a Blessing.* If we are not to render Evil for Evil, we ought not then to detract from those who have spoken ill of us before: and it is our indispensable Duty sincerely & honestly to pardon them. This is what those Persons do not do, (tho' they pretend they are ready to do it,) who talk much after this Manner; such a one has detracted from me, and if I had a mind to, I know very well how I cou'd revenge my self. I cou'd easily tell of many shameful Things of his, which would very much hurt his Reputation; but I won't mention 'em; and I pardon him the Injury he has done me, as I wish that GOD may forgive me my Offences. Sect. X. 1 Pet. 3 8, 9

Altho' there may appear a great deal of good Humour herein, yet there is certainly a great deal of hidden Malice. For can we deny that it is a great Malignity, which wou'd insinuate that we have great Reason to complain of a Man, to call him a Detractor, and to shew that he has done shameful Things, the Publication whereof wou'd

SECT. X. avenge thoſe whom he had detracted from? There is moreover a manifeſt Contradiction herein, ſince if we ſincerely pardon'd him the Wrong we complain of, we ſhould not talk of it, but hide it and forget it with Pleaſure, and from hence it comes, that in the Scripture ſtile, to forget, to hide and pardon a Fault, are expreſt by the ſame Terms and do often ſignify the ſame Thing. Thus then to relate a Fault which we ſay we forgive to a Man, is not to forgive it. Conſequently, to ask of GOD that he wou'd forgive us our Treſpaſſes as we forgive Men their's (with the Mouth only) is to pray that he wou'd ſhew us no Mercy.

We muſt imitate the Example of *S. Paul*, who ſays, *They curſe and we bleſs*; a Conduct quite oppoſite to that of thoſe who hold and teach, that it is lawful to kill, provided that it be in ſecret and without Offence, thoſe who detract from us, if we can no other way ſtop their Detraction. This is the Jeſuitical Deciſion. I confeſs that it appears hard to the Fleſh not to revenge our ſelves on thoſe who hurt our Credit; nevertheleſs, this Difficulty will be much diminiſhed, if we reflect, firſt, that beſides GOD's abſolutely requiring that he permits that we be covered with Shame and Infamy, in order to make us humble, and ready to acknowledge our Sins; to exerciſe our Patience and that we

may

may put in Practice many Virtues which we cou'd not practice, if the Malice of our Enemies did not give us occasion therefor; so that we may say with reference to those who have spoken ill of us, what *I. avid* said with regard to *Shimei*, who cursed him, *The Lord hath said unto him, Curse David.* 2 Sam. 16. 10 SECT. X.

It is an Effect of GOD's Providence, who permits our Enemies to insult us, either to punish us, or to try us, to give us ways to shew with what Resignation we can acquiesce in his Will.

A second Reason which should make us abstain from Revenge, is that by that way, far from re-establishing our Honour, we shall on the contrary encrease our Infamy, and make it known to still more Persons. Truly this will be giving new Matter and new Occasion, to those whom we backbite in our Turn, to divulge anew and still farther, the Evil which they have already told of, and to add thereto besides this, all that they have not as yet published. Hence it was that *Philip* King of *Macedon* wou'd not banish a Man who had said very mortifying Things of him; and gave this Reason for it to his Friends; *I will not banish him*, said he, *for fear that when he finds himself with more Persons, he should talk of me to a greater Number.*

On the contrary, If any Thing will re-establish our Credit, it is to pardon those

Sect. X. who have offended us. This is the Effect of so high a Virtue and the Mark of so generous a Soul, that it will excuse the ill Qualities we may otherwise have, and which have caused Men to speak ill of us. Before GOD himself, this Charity we shew towards our Enemies, will serve to cover those Sins which have given Occasion to others to speak ill of us, if we afterwards abandon them.

Another Motive not to revenge our selves is, to consider that we ought to be much more vext at our selves who have these Faults, than against those who discover them to others.

Since after all we act, and they only speak, and if we did not hurt our selves by our Vices, they could not hurt us by their Detractions; it is in our selves, they find the Matter & Object of these Detractions; we afford Fewel and Fire, and they blow it into a Flame.

To keep us from Revenge, Let us imagine that all the World knows our Vices and publish our Sins. In this Case we must absolutely live in Peace with those who speak ill of us; since it is impossible to do without the help & Company of all the World. You will say that this Supposition is impossible. I don't think that it is and we every Day see that others know our Faults better than we do our selves:

At leaſt it is very poſſible that all thoſe whoſe help we need, may themſelves ſpeak ill of us. If we wou'd then hate them and be revenged on them and have no Commerce with them, we muſt deprive our ſelves of their Aſſiſtance which is extremely contrary to our own Intereſt. For the Corruption of Men is ſuch, that they are vext and in a Paſſion when we ſay againſt them thoſe Truths which are to their Diſadvantage: And on the contrary, that nothing pleaſes them ſo much as to hear lyes which flatter them, and to hear themſelves praiſed without Reaſon, while Truth ſo greatly offends them. SECT. X.

In fine, If any one has Detracted from us thro' Folly, we ſhould pity it; if thro' Levity, we ſhould deſpiſe it; if thro' Injury, we ſhould pardon it.

If all that has been ſaid cannot perſwade you from Revenge, here is a Way that you may be revenged without offending GOD, and without injuring your ſelf; a mean on the Contrary, which will ſerve to your Honour, your Happineſs, and your Salvation. It is to lay aſide your Sins and to take from your Enemies the Arms which they make uſe of to fight againſt you, and to force them to admire your Goodneſs or at leaſt to be ſilent. When Men ſhall ſee you pious and ſincere, they will hardly believe that you have been vile and wicked.

SECT. X. Your present Virtues without doubt, will serve to efface the Horror of your past Crimes.

Another very sure Way not to entertain Hatred and Desires of Revenge against a Man, is not to enquire curiously about what has been said of us, unless it be with a Design to amend and not to be offended. This excellent Counsel the wise Man gives us, Eccl. 7. 21, 22. *Take no heed unto all Words that are spoken, least thou hear thy Servant curse thee. For oftentimes also thine own Heart knoweth, that thou thy self likewise hast cursed others.* Above all we should not demand the Names of those who have spoken ill of us, lest we should conceive hatred against them; besides that thereby we shall engage those in Detraction who name them to us.

It concerns me nevertheless, you will say, to know those who speak ill of me, that so I may not act before them as Friends, but may be on my Guard.

I answer that there is another way much more sure to know who are our Friends and who, our Enemies. It is only to examine whether we have done no Man wrong, whether we have not detracted from any one; whether we have been always kind and officious towards every one; then we may be perswaded that they do not detract from us, since we have not given any

one

one Occaſion to hate and defame us. Let us farther examine, whether we have been humble, ſober and virtuous in our Words. If it be thus, We have given no Ground for Detraction, and may flatter our ſelves, that Men do not ſpeak ill of us, and that all the World are our Friends, if we may know them thereby. But if you are vicious, you may be aſſured, That in this detracting Age, all who know your Vices, will ſpeak of them, and ſo if you pleaſe are your Enemies, whom you ought to be aware of, and that by giving them hereafter no Matter to cenſure you. We muſt live with all Men as Friends, not doing them any Injury, or even deſiring to hurt them; and as with Enemies, not giving them any hold of us. SECT. X.

When Informers who endeavour to ſow Diſcord, come and tell you, that ſuch and ſuch have ſpoken ill of you, far from being angry with your Detractors, and ſhewing that thoſe who have ſpoken ill of you do deſerve greater blame than you; keep your ſelves in Humility and Modeſty mixt with Meekneſs, and ſay, according to the Counſel of *Epictetus*, "I am not at all aſtoniſhed "That they ſpeak diſadvantageouſly of "me; they might have ſaid much more, "if they had known all my failings" Or, as an honeſt Man of the laſt Age, "If "Men know my Imperfections ſo thro'ly, "how much more does GOD know them?

SECT. X. Some will doubtleſs object and ſay, that if we do not detract from thoſe who detract from us, and do not rail at thoſe who rail at us, we ſhall become the ſport of all the World, who ſeeing that they can offend us without danger, will do it continually. I anſwer, That our Detractions will do us no good, and only draw on us more and more thoſe of others, as we have elſewhere ſhewn; and therefore that Silence is far more proper to quench this Fire, which our Railleries wou'd but ſupply with new Matter and Fuel. We need only ſhew that it is Charity or Prudence which makes us dumb; and the following Example may clear up what I have juſt now ſaid. A Man having been cruelly railed at without making any Anſwer; one of the Company ſaid, *He muſt needs be a Fool, who wou'd hold his Peace on ſuch an Occaſion.* You are miſtaken, replied the firſt, *A Fool knows not how to Bridle his Tongue.*

If there be but few Perſons who ſpeak ill of us, we may make uſe of the Anſwer which the Poet *Taſſo* made on account of a Man who ſpake ill of him to all that he ſaw: *It is better*, ſaid *Taſſo*, *for him to ſpeak ill of me to all the World, than if all the World did ſpeak ill of me to him.*

My laſt Advice to the Detracted is, That they wou'd free themſelves from all their Vices, not only that ſo they may give no occaſion

occasion to others for Detraction, but also that so Hell may not exercise it's rage upon them. This is a Duty which is common to them with all Christians, and which those whom we are speaking of may practice so much the more easily, as they are informed of their Vices by the Mouth of others, and by that means know them the better. This is the way to gather Grapes of Thorns and Figs of Thistles, and Pearls from a Dung-hill, in a word, to get Good out of Evil; such will profit much by the Detractions of others, since being shewn their Faults by them, and being apprised that they are blamed for them, they are furnished with Means and Motives to get rid of 'em. Thus in some sort, they ought to take it in good part of them who backbite them. Perhaps they did it thro' Envy or Hatred; but what Matters it, what was their Intention, or from what Principle they spake, if we can turn to our Salvation, what will perhaps one Day prove the Cause of their Destruction? Here we may apply what St. *Paul* said, *Some preach CHRIST of Envy & Strife Of Contention and not sincerely, supposing to add Affliction to my Bonds. What then? Notwithstanding every way, whether in Pretence or in Truth, CHRIST is preached, and I therein do rejoice, yea and will rejoice.* Thus how ill soever the Motive may be which Detractors act from, we know

SECT. X.

Matt. 7, 16.

Phil. 1. 15 & sequen.

our

SECT. X. our Vices by their Detractions, we may improve their Malice to our Advantage, and it is at this that we may rejoice.

The Uses *of this Section.*

HERE it must be remarked, That altho' we have divided this Section into four different Articles, nevertheless what we have said under the one may agree to each of the other Three, and even of the three other together. For Example the Advice we gave not to detract, may also serve for Detractors, for those who hear Detraction, and for the Detracted; for these who have been active and passive in the Sin; the Reason of this is, because that it may very well happen, and often does, that they who detract do often hear others detract, and are likewise themselves detracted from. Thus in this Regard these four Articles may agree to one Person.

These Counsels and Duties appearing to me of the last Importance for the Subject I have been treating of, and containing what is most essential to be practiced by us, whether we be the Authors, or the Objects, or the Hearers of Detraction, I wou'd earnestly advise that they be followed and put in Practice. Nevertheless the more

profitable

profitable they appear to me, the more I fear they won't be followed, becauſe commonly the moſt excellent Things are the moſt difficult, ſuch are ſome of the Duties we have mentioned, and it is this Difficulty that will hinder Men. SECT. X.

Yet even this ought not to diſcourage 'em ſo much as to ſtir them up to ask of the GOD of Love, whoſe Power is unlimited and able to help them, that he wou'd aſſiſt them to follow what his Word, and that Reaſon which he has endowed them with, do preſcribe them to do.

The Concluſion of this Treatiſe.

HERE we might take Occaſion ſtrongly to exhort Perſons to leave off Detraction. But being perſwaded that thoſe Exhortations we have made thro' the whole Courſe of this Treatiſe, are capable of making Impreſſion on the Hearts, where the Love of GOD, of our Neighbour, and of our ſelves is not entirely quenched, there remains but little for us to do to finiſh this Treatiſe.

I exhort you to conſider, That the Detractor ſins eſſentially againſt Charity, and thereby ſhews that he has no Religion at all; for how can a Man have any Religion, if he

Sect. X. he love neither GOD or his Neighbour? Which is the fulfilling of the Law. Can we love our Neighbour when we hurt him in those things which he esteems as his greatest Advantage in the World, even his Credit and Reputation? Can we love him, as we love our selves, if while we take so much Care to hide our own Defects, and are so troubled if they are known abroad, we expose his so openly?

Can we also say, That we love GOD, if we hate those who are formed after his Image? And moreover, If any one love not his Brother whom he sees, how can he love GOD whom he hath not seen so distinctly? And if we have not Charity, how can we enter into Heaven, which is the Source and the Example of Love?

That Heaven, where GOD the Father will cause the Saints to taste the most delicious Effects of his Love, in which their Welfare consists: That Heaven, where the Saints shall burn with Zeal and Love for their Creator, in which their Glory consists: That Heaven, from whence the Lord of the World, sheds abroad his Blessings and Favours on all the Inhabitants of the Earth, even the most Wicked.

Without Charity how can we enter into that Paradise, from whence Jesus Christ descended only thro' the Effect of his Love for Mankind, and to redeem them by the

Price

Price of his own Blood; and whither he ascended again to exercise still his Love towards them, by interceding on their Behalf before GOD his Father? SECT. X.

In fine, How can we expect without Charity to enter into that Heaven from whence the Holy Spirit by an Effect of his Love, pours down upon Men his Graces and Gifts, which comfort, which regenerate, which prepare them for *an Inheritance in Heaven*?

On the other Hand, when we have sinned against Charity by Detraction, may we not fear to be the Companions of Devils, since an evil Tongue is already sat on Fire of Hell, as *S. James* says? Chap. 3. Ver. 14.

Let us endeavour to live all so like Christians, that we may have no Cause, no Reason to speak ill one of another. Let us avoid the very appearance of Evil, so as to give no Ground for rash Judgments. Let us well consider every Time that we Sin so as that others know of our Sins we miserably Scandalize them, since we are the Occasions of their Evil speaking, and consequently of their Sin, which is an Aggravation of those Sins which occasion Detraction.

I hope they who read this Treatise will receive these Exhortations of mine with Complacency, since they have five Characters which are, it seems to me, very fit to make them efficacious.

1. The

SECT. X. 1. The first of those Characters which an Exhortation ought to have, in order that it may move and make Impression, is, that the Things exhorted to, be of Importance. Now nothing is of greater Consequence than the Charity, or rather the Salvation we exhort Men to attain unto, by avoiding Detraction.

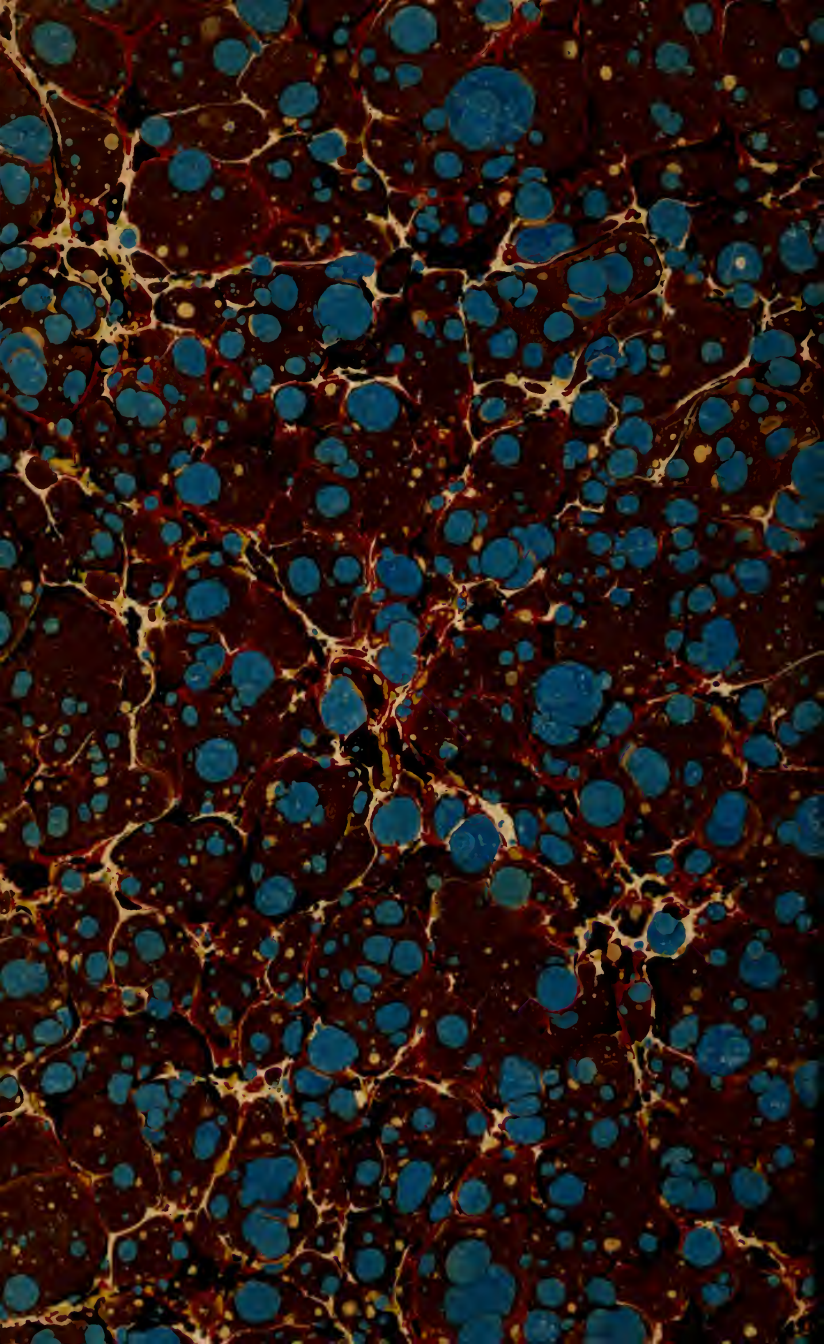
2. A second Character which Exhortations should have that so they may be followed is, that they be necessary and well applied to the Thing exhorted unto, and to the Time in which it is to be done. I reckon that also on this regard it will be granted, that there is ground, and that it is proper at this present Time, if ever it was, to exhort the World to abstain from Detraction, since perhaps there never was an Age wherein it was more in Vogue than the present. Languages have been often changed, Words have been different in their Pronunciation, their termination and their signification. Every Nation according to their Language has variously expreſt their Detractions; but at all Times, in all Nations, and at present as much and more than ever, Detraction has upheld and does uphold it's Empire in the World.

3. We ought, Thirdly, to give way to Exhortations founded on strong Motives, powerful Reasons and necessary Advice.

In

In this Regard we are perſwaded, That all which has been ſaid againſt Detraction, is very ſtrong, very preſſing, and very neceſſary. SECT. X.

4. Fourthly, We are more ready to obey Exhortations, when we are perſwaded of the Sincerity of thoſe who Exhort. As I can have no Advantage from deceiving others, and on the contrary ſhould be accountable unto a righteous GOD for ſo doing, you ought to be convinced of my Sincerity.

5. Laſtly, Exhortations are more perſwaſive, when we know that he who gives them, has a right thereto. This Right belongs to all Men. It is one of their Duties to exhort their Neighbours to forſake their Crimes, and to follow Virtue, as has been already ſhewn, and therefore they have Right to exhort Men to ſhun Detraction. Luk. 23. 34 And to do this I conjure them by the *loving Kindneſs of Chriſt*, who prayed to his Father for his very Murderers. And may the great G O D accompany this Work with his Bleſſing, and his Grace for the Sanctification, and the eternal Salvation of thoſe who ſhall read it.

AMEN.